NOW IT'S PERSONAL

WELCOME

Embark on an awesome journey of the mind of the visionary, Skippy. Exploring issues such as spirituality, intimacy, grief and loss, he presents his perspective using simple wisdom and basic home truths.

In all things, he loved to look at examples from the natural world to see if humans could learn lessons there.

This tale is also a true romance story of Skippy and ceci. It is both a revelation and a testimony to the power of Love.

Skippy travels through these topics in his mind, sharing the overview. He would leave the details to our Creator to sort out, once we align with His Will.

~ BLESSINGS ~

Dedicated to our Creator,

the ONE MIND in all there is,

with reverence, awe and gratitude.

~

To my Beloved Readers,

To my ceci's family who have stuck by

her through thick and thin,

Also, to the Hamilton Writers Group (Team 1)

that helped ceci so much.

~

BLESSINGS TO ALL

VOY CON DIOS!

~

NOW IT'S PERSONAL

SKIPPY DYER

Now It Is Personal and ***Hanging Your Butt in the Breeze*** © 2018 in the name of Jack Peyton Dyer (aka SKIPPY) & Ceci Lacey L. Dyer

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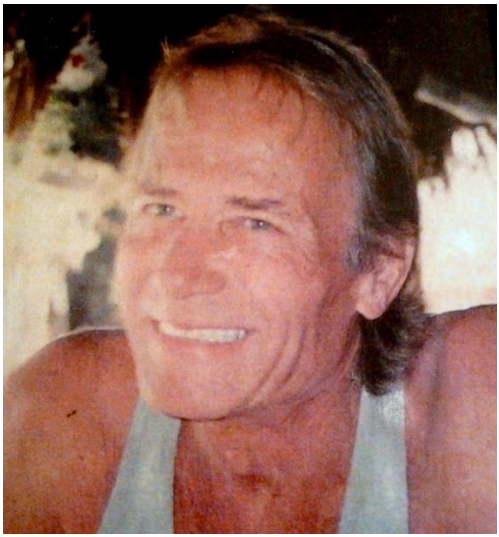
HANGING YOUR BUTT IN THE BREEZE is Book 2 in the **SKIPPYTRIPS** series.

This book contains Chapter 1(an excerpt) from ***Hanging Your Butt in the Breeze*** *by Ceci L. Dyer*

This chapter won an Honorable Mention for the Gillette Reminiscence Award for Short Works in November 2018, Hamilton, Ontario

~

JACK PEYTON DYER



SKIPPY is the legacy of Jack P. Dyer. As his childhood nickname, he privately continued to live from that viewpoint throughout his life. This book ***'NOW IT'S PERSONAL'*** is an introductory adventure into his world of wonder, awe and inner authority. With degrees in Biology, Zoology, Entomology and Psychology, he was extremely knowledgeable about 'critters,' as he called all animals. Many of his favorite stories are contained in this volume. Too soon, he, tragically, passed from the physical realm in 2004.

Visiting Yelapa for seventeen years, he leased the Hotel Lagunita there and was proudly its patron for more than a decade. He loved that he was directly responsible for supporting up to three hundred people in the native community. However, he always realized he was but a single chapter in the hotel's long history. He considered his role to be a steward of the area and one goal he aspired to was to have a scientific research facility in the community. For every 'critter' we knew about, there were millions more that had not been discovered and studied in this jungle.

His gentle, loving spirit is alive and well and very much guiding this updated version. These are his original words to which I have expanded some aspects. They speak volumes about the man, the love of my life, my Skippy. This is his unique work, as true today, as when he and I wrote it together. It is the best way to honor and respect him.

With eternal devotion,
Ceci L. Dyer

~

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Excerpt from:

Hanging Your Butt in the Breeze

Ceci L. Dyer

1. Sleeping with Bulls 1

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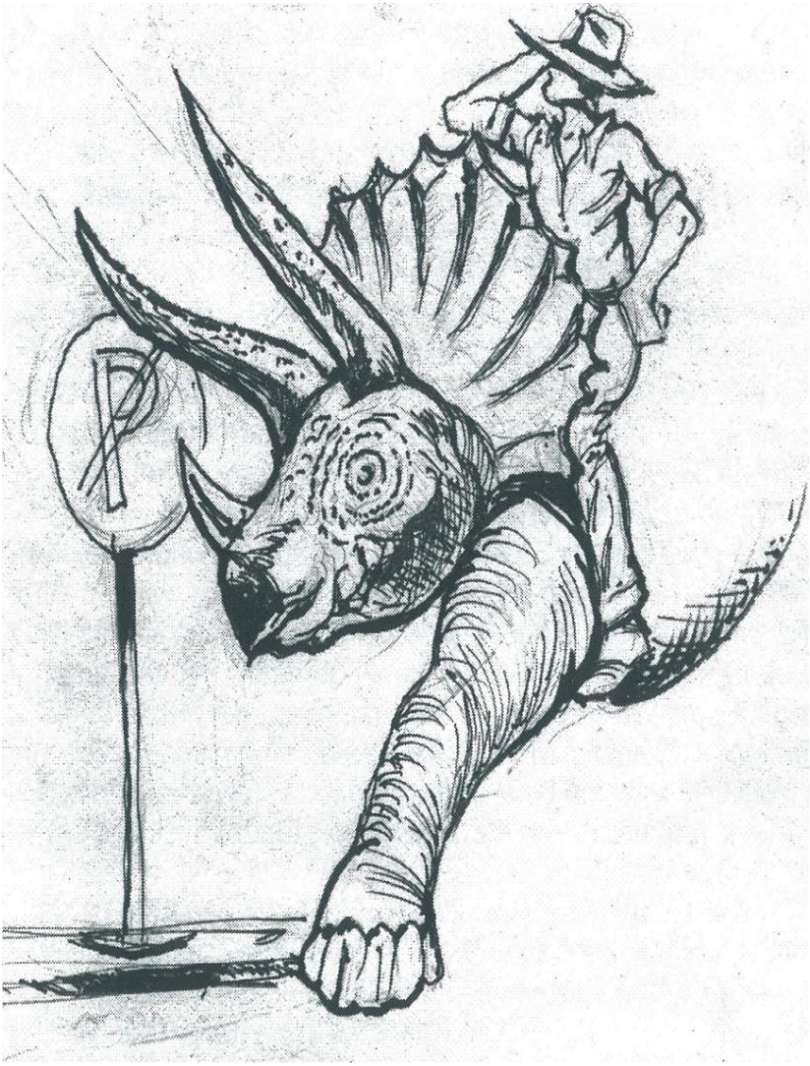
CHAPTER 1

Where to park your Triceratops?



Imagine that your greatest protector in life has two twelve-foot horns on his head; a three-foot horn on the end of his turtle-like beak, is thirty feet long and nine feet high. He has a huge crest behind those horns, where a young boy could safely ride in his and have amazing adventures like Jungle Boy did. Since no-one knows for sure what these guys looked like, having only found their bones in archeological digs, I imagine my guardian to be a greenish-grey color with yellow stripes on his scales and, like the lizards of today, he would proudly display his enormous blood-red head plate when aroused. Especially when fighting another male for dominance. No doubt I'll get in trouble for that idea, but I know this guy intimately. I've been up close and personal with this creature all my life in whatever way I could.

Virtually unchallenged in his world, even a Tyrannosaurus Rex would avoid being gored in the guts by his sharp horns. This is an ancient reptile of enormous proportions and a giant bull in his species, on the scale of our African elephants today. He is not the biggest dinosaur but with his massive, forceful body, shield-like crest and those long, sharp horns, he is the best of the best. He is a Triceratops and he is one amazing animal. As an herbivore,

weighing in at twelve tons (sorry, but I refuse to go metric,) he eats one ton of grass and leaves every day.

Now you can't just park your Triceratops anywhere, plus you have to hide him from the world or everyone thinks you're nuts. This is the kind of dilemma I find myself in a lot. In fact, it pretty much sums up my challenge of being Skippy. Wherever I go and whatever I do, I have to make room for this gentle giant who is so feared and misunderstood by the world. People wouldn't respond well if you ride up behind his shield and just stroll down the beach. Eyebrows get raised when you even talk the way I have so far.

My childhood name was Skippy because I thought it was a faster way to get somewhere. The name stuck and has since formed my identity as a truth lover and seeker.

I desperately want the world to be happy. But I've just never experienced it that way and in order to survive, I sought and found refuge in the natural world.

I had the problem of finding sanctuary for Jonathan which is my name for my best non-human friend and personal guardian, my Triceratops. But, in addition to Jonathan, I live in a world of intimate contact with all

creatures found among humans, until very recently. And this is the story of how I survived my life and came to find the truth of love with another human being. Now I have the best of both worlds as my sweetie and I mentally ride up behind Jonathan's crest together.

I'm showing her my world and how to relate to critters in a peaceful, easy way. Of course, she had arachnophobia from hell when we first met. I've had a lot to teach her, especially about spiders, but the story is about learning. We are all teachers and students. (My sweetie's name is ceci and she will explain later in the book why she mostly uses a small 'c.' It wasn't my doing.)

Why do we have to grow up? Why do we have to leave behind the wonder world that children see and know? Where was it ever written that you couldn't maintain a childlike awe in an adult body? In fact, I'd always heard you had to be like children to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. I'm confused and very frustrated. Why is it tough and lonely to have this perspective all my life and not be able to find support, validation and encouragement for it?

Now, I grant you, there's a difference between being childlike and childish. It's not that I can't function in an

adult world. I've had oodles of 'real' jobs with the three-piece suit, the big responsibilities, status and money to sweeten the pot. I've done advanced degrees in academic institutions. I've been married -- several times -- raised children (a total of eight with one natural, four step and three foster kids) -- had the houses, the dog, cats, tree and birdhouses for every yard. But I have known since I was seven that I would have to live in the tropics sooner or later and leave all of it behind. Because to remain childlike, I had to get closer to nature, to what's really REAL. I just never fit in. Ever. Anywhere.

It seems to me that childish people keep trying to behave like adults in the world and without childlike awe are repressed, controlling and rigid. I haven't met many happy adults in mainstream life. They may get vicarious joy through children of their own, but they can't relate to their adolescents who are acting out the rage of 'growing up' out of their natural innocence.

Adolescence is the threshold of leaving behind the world of the child and entering that of the adult. The problem is that if we lose the innocence of our child's perspective, our adult life is doomed. Yet that is the process of socialization that is sanctioned and encouraged in the

modern world and in a nutshell, that is why there are so many unhappy people around.

Very young children automatically deny the obvious when caught. "No, I didn't take one," they may say with their hand in the cookie jar. KIDS JUST NATURALLY TELL THE TRUTH UNTIL THEY LEARN HOW TO LIE. I am referring more to the elaborate fabrications they conjure up in a critical moment to avoid trouble or cast blame onto another.

We can learn a lot from extreme examples such as incest or sexual abuse in children. Unless they are believed and supported by the people they confide in, they are most likely to recant their stories. The severe threat of terror from their offender, combined with the pressure of not being believed forces them to back down. It is truer that they lie when retracting than when telling the details initially. Sad but a fact.

~

Here's my kind of thinking. Down here in the tropics, there is a plant known as the Datura, containing the hallucinogenic chemical called Belladonna. I know of a case

when a grown man wandered off into the jungle for three days after drinking tea made from this plant and was completely lost. The other day I noticed a grasshopper had nibbled one of the leaves on our plant and I had to stop for a while and wonder about what it would do to the grasshopper? Would he lose three days or three months? Of course, he doesn't know time anyway but what if it finished his life cycle early? What would happen to him especially with his multi-faceted eyes? Pretty trippy, I wager. You see, as Skippy, my mind just goes there. I don't even have a choice.

I worry about all those critters out there. And there's so many of them from the undiscovered beetles in the jungle to the animals at the bottom of the sea. Yet, it expands my world, my thinking and my appreciation of nature to view things this way. With awe, with wonder, with innocence, I marvel constantly at the gifts of life surrounding us daily.

Nature is something I can really trust. And it seems to me that trust is one of the major things childish adults have lost. We have to build seemingly secure lives of work, accumulating things, planning for retirement and protecting ourselves from dangers in life. Animals, on the

other hand, live in the now with fine-tuned sensors in an endless array of complex schemes for dealing with life's challenges. Of course, there are some tough conditions of predation and vulnerability in the natural world. As the old saying goes: it's a jungle out there.

Here's the major difference I see between the way humans and animals operate. Imagine a zebra at the waterhole being stalked by a lion. The zebra sees the lion and outruns him. The zebra's over it. He wanders back to the waterhole. End of story.

If it had been a human, it would have taken months to get over it, if ever. Isn't that a strange phenomenon? Humans hang on to fear. Animals don't. They have learned how to make it work for them to maximize survival and then they let it go. Some humans don't let go of it all their lives. That's a hard truth.

There is also infinite resourcefulness, adaptability and symbiotic cooperation in nature. Try this on for size. Termites by themselves are incapable of digesting wood. So, they have a colony of microscopic protozoa (a one-celled animal) that lives in their intestines. The protozoa can digest the wood and they both share the nutrients. This

may sound insignificant, but if there were no termites, we'd be up to our asses in dead trees.

Also, there's a type of ant here known as the mora, or army ant, which travel in huge numbers and eat every living insect, scorpion or spider in their path, making them a formidable, yet positive force. They frequently will enter your home and clean house for you, up every pillar or post, covering every square inch, so it's best just to pack a bag for the day and leave them to it. It's not always convenient, though.

One day, as I was sitting on my porch reading, I saw them coming by the thousands in one line. I picked up a can of insect spray and drew a border along the window ledge. I watched spell-bound as the very first scout ant reached the perimeter of my defense line. It instantly stopped and turned. In unison, ALL the others along the line turned and retreated in the opposite direction. They seem to have some form of communication that gives them one mind. When one gets the obstacle, everyone gets the message. How efficient is that?

The one that would be my worst nightmare, though, is the wasp that digs a hole in the ground and then goes spider hunting. Its' sting temporarily paralyses the spider,

holding it captive. The wasp then chews off all eight of the legs and flies off with the spider to its hole. There, the wasp lays an egg on the spider which, upon hatching, has a living, terribly helpless meal. Can you imagine having no arms, no legs, being paralyzed and then being agonizingly slowly eaten? That one really gets even to me.

I won't try to kid you that the natural world isn't without its horror stories. But as death balances life, nature compensates and corrects these interdependent needs. For instance, you can find up to 35,000 recorded species of spider with up to 135,000 more unrecorded and as many as two million per acre of some farmland areas. That's a lot of spiders requiring that they are food for somebody or things would get out of hand. In fact, spiders are meals for birds, praying mantises and other spiders so much that, from our perspective, they live most of their lives in vulnerable uncertainty. They also hang out on their webs in the breeze, making themselves an easy target for predators. Even my sweetie now feels compassion for them, but she still can't stomach the specials in National Geographic on the spider articles. We've still got a way to go, yet with her arachnophobia.

Real children, like animals, live in the now and are endlessly fascinated and enthralled by each and every moment. How can it be right for us to lose that? Why can't we be grown-up, adult-size children and keep our love affair with life going?

My inner child, Skippy, found a place to park and hide Jonathan so he'd be close by and available anytime, yet everyone would still be safe. I know he is roaming on the upper range of another dimension in a parallel reality, just a few nanoseconds from Earth time.

If you google a short two-minute show called 'Andy's Dinosaur Adventures,' you will see Andy riding a Triceratops just as I imagine. There is also a spectacular fight between two males revealing the head plate becoming engorged with blood, frightening the weaker one away. What I had not envisioned were two large snake eyes in the center of the dinosaur's shield which make him look even more ferocious. He looks like a giant cobra about to strike. Absolutely awesome and wondrous for me to learn something more about my best friend.

Until recently that's where I spent a lot of time, traveling with him freely and invincibly when I needed to

run from this crazy, upside-down world. And I needed to escape a lot -- until I met my sweetie.

Jonathan is my personal salvation and protector and I could never think of him otherwise. On the other hand, I would never contemplate inviting him to live in my house with me. That would be dumb because it would be worse than the proverbial bull in the china shop. There would be no shop left.

I am aware, though, that for some people, the pain in their lives can seem like an unwelcome, oversized dinosaur is living in their house with them. It becomes a colossal force to be reckoned with. It can seem huge, overwhelming and uncontrollable at times. Grief from the death of a loved one, for example, or especially the death of a child can seem like a Triceratops, or a T-Rex, lives right in your home with you. There is no escape. It takes over everything and turns your life upside down and inside out.

Thousands of people around the globe are experiencing this right now since September 11, 2001. For many, their lives have been totally altered forever. The 'blessed terror' that day has sent shock waves out that have thrust the world into mass grief and escalating fear. What

on earth could be 'blessed' about that day? What else is in store for us still?

'What are people doing with that pain?' I ask myself. 'Where are they going to park it so they can continue to function?' Life goes on after all, even when you'd rather it didn't.

Pain can only be a blessing ultimately if you have the tools to work it through. One of the main devices is being able to contain the pain somehow. This is one of the central themes of this book, so I'll be coming back to this often.

Think about it this way. Say your private tragedy rips a huge abyss in your life which becomes an ever-widening gulf separating your old, familiar past from an uncertain, scary, unknown future. There seems no way to cross this chasm and it threatens to pull you under. It really doesn't matter if your life is ripped apart quickly like September 11th did for many people or if it's a slow creeping, festering wound like alcoholism, adultery, divorce, or the ongoing illness of a loved one. Pain is pain. It sucks. But there you are. Now what are you going to do about it?

Pain containment and management essentially form the bridge over the void connecting the past with the future. The most valuable resource we have available is the power of the mind. It turns out 'THERE IS ANOTHER WAY TO THINK ABOUT EVERYTHING.' Even pain.

I tell people coming to this paradise hotel that my job is to help them bury their problems in the beach sand. They need to unload it on their vacation so they don't return home with as much as they came with. The sand can handle it. This is pain containment. Dump it. Learn from it. What is *your* pain telling you? Are you hanging onto it because it's familiar or is it truly unresolved? Remember the zebra at the waterhole would have let it go already. She is probably safely bedded down for the night, albeit still easily alerted.

You know our parents' generation had a lot of basic guidelines which helped keep their lives on track. They all illustrate the power of changing your thinking. My blessed mama had several which sounds like pain management to me such as:

- Mind over matter.
- Life's messy. Clean it up.

- There's a place for everything and everything in its place.
- And her favorite saying of Scarlet O'Hara from 'Gone with the Wind' was:
  I won't think about that today. I'll think about that tomorrow.

With such a philosophy, I always thought she was in denial, since tomorrow never comes, when you apply it the next day. Even as a kid, I figured that out. But now I realize the wisdom because deferring the pain even a day may allow it to recede bit by bit. (It reminds me of a joke: "How do you eat an elephant?" "One bite at a time.")

Also, she's one of the strongest, most successful, powerhouses of energy I've ever known, so she must be doing something right. Relative to others, she's had a tough life, although she probably doesn't think that way. Now I use all these tools plus some I've discovered myself which I'm going to pass along to all of you.

~

We need to address folks dealing with the searing deep pain of grief and loss and addictions etc. To have a

balanced perspective, we also are compelled to focus on the caretakers of people in intense pain. Their pain is different because they have to hold it all together. But, again, since pain is relentlessly pain, it can be an out of control dinosaur whichever way you approach it.

The good news is that these are learnable, teachable communication skills applicable no matter which end of the experience you are on. Once mastered, then and only then, can we discover the hidden blessing in pain. New dimensions open up within ourselves and ultimately liberate us. We are transformed, our pain is contained and the grain of sand that acts as an irritant for the oyster becomes a pearl. A brand new being emerges from the successful integrative process of pain. The caterpillar has transformed into a butterfly. This brings us to another gigantic resource for pain management and why this work would not be complete without insects and dinosaurs. It is the healing power of Mother Nature.

Hang in there, folks, as it promises to be a wild ride ahead. I believe in the transcendent power of nature, love and of course, the positive oriented mind. The strength of the individual cannot be underestimated and I know you have direct access to that also. You can find your power.

We'll cross that bridge over the abyss together with all this to guide us.

I can only offer the hope to the world that you can find comfort and joy for yourselves on the other side of your personal pain. At least, I desire that you gain some tools to fortify you from life's challenges ahead. We all have to reach our own answers, but we can help each other with shortcuts. An unknown source said, "A wise man can learn from the mistakes of others: a fool is destined to repeat them."

I may reach different conclusions that work for me, with Jonathan being the prime example. The mental means, however, are the same for all of us. Preaching doesn't help people, I've noticed, so I encourage you to think for yourselves. Take what you need and what works for you: leave the rest.

Perhaps remembering your own childhood imaginary friend is a place to start. What was the name? We need to give kids more credit: they may be on to something. Chances are they will outgrow this inner life by age seven when chemical changes happen in the brain. They can be supported to remember by talking, making pictures or writing journals well before that happens.

Allow them that expression as it could turn out to be an enormous asset throughout life's tests. Maintaining my self-concept as a carefree Skippy with my best buddy, Jonathan, has carried me through my numerous challenges. Sadly, many adults seem threatened by this behavior, trying to downplay and outright discourage their children from retaining these inner rewards. They call them hallucinations and dismiss them.

I'll share some of my journey now and reveal how these issues and my solutions unfolded in my life. I assume your mind is open if you are still reading. Let it continue to be as we carry on.

But first, I want to introduce my sweetie, ceci.

~

CHAPTER 2

Lethal web with giant spiders

I discovered my little niche in a tropical setting and settled into life there. The price was ending yet another marriage to a woman unwilling to move with me and leaving all my possessions behind in storage. I had found refuge in the village of Yelapa, in Mexico and leased a hotel there that I got others to run because I not only dropped out of the rat race: I RETIRED. For years I lived in contentment with my natural world around me but despite enjoying the lascivious life of a human beach dog, I continued to be profoundly lonely. I just couldn't share Skippy with anybody, let alone Jonathan. We both remained hidden. However, this chapter now introduces my sweetie, ceci, because it shows the immediate challenge of loving me.

~

Ceci here -- Like Skippy, I never felt like I fit in anywhere either but unlike him, I could not maintain my childhood innocence. It had been lost growing up in a fearful, emotionally conflicted environment where keeping a low profile was essential. Fortunately, my middle place among my siblings allowed me to do that and I was not the

usual target in trouble. My grades were excellent as education was highly valued with both parents being teachers. I had no close peers as friends and mostly stayed alone, within the family walls. My home emotionally was alternately repressed anger or eruptions into overt rage with unpredictable, frequent violence. I rarely felt safe there.

Professionally, I had a very active, successful life as a psychotherapist for many years after obtaining my Master's degree in Counselling Psychology in 1985. Shortly after that, my fourteen-year marriage had broken down. My ex only started talking to me after two years of separation when our divorce was final. I was devastated to be divorced and felt like a failure. I had leaned on his stability but also sensed an undercurrent of hostility. He came from an alcoholic background but did not drink to excess.

Alcohol had been my crutch since the age of sixteen. My first and only beer that fateful day made me experience a new *normal* in a way I had never felt before. I was hooked and frequently abused it. I fit the term 'high functioning alcoholic' although at that time I was in serious denial. Several decades would pass before I discovered that was

the symptom of a much deeper cause. In 1986, I quit drinking and smoking and was sober for twelve years before I drank again.

Still I frequently wondered what was wrong with me. I managed to bury myself in other people's problems by day. Nights and weekends were very hard for me. I got a new red sports car with a sun-roof and would drive for hours around the beautiful Okanagan Valley. Often, I had to consciously resist the urge to drive off the cliff.

Personally, I was unfulfilled, dissatisfied and constantly wondering what was missing and how to find it. I was afraid of so many things, especially meeting new people outside my work life. I lived in my own world of books, career, my sweet little home and my two dogs, Angel and Joey. Losing connection with the child in me, I maintained enough awareness that something important was missing that I had to go searching for something more. I spent a fortune on workshops, counseling, acupuncture, naturopaths or whatever was going on, hoping something would give me more answers. I read self-help books non-stop becoming very informed, but in no way healed.

It never occurred to me, as a Canadian, that I could actually live full-time in the tropics, which I loved. I had

spent all my vacations travelling to Mexico after the end of my marriage and during a ten-year stint of living alone. I worked on myself to be a healthy partner, but never met anyone that wasn't scared off by my deep intuitive nature.

Finally, I just ran out of steam. I took a month off to reflect on my life and at the end of that time, the only thing I knew for sure was that I had to move to Mexico for a few months at least. My plan was to come back and open a private practice again out of a rented home. I no longer wanted the burden and expense of a home and an office. Fate would determine that I would not live in Canada for another eight years: a great case of 'man plans, God laughs.'

I already knew Puerto Vallarta was where I wanted to go. Six weeks later, I had closed my office, sold my home, packed up my Ford Explorer with my valuable possessions, including my dogs and was driving to Mexico. I arrived at my intuitive destination. Despite my exhaustion and my family's horror, I had grown increasingly energized as I drove. I saw this only as excitement at having completed the entire process. Little did I know I was in the grips of a full-blown manic episode.

Prior to leaving, a very psychic massage therapist I'd been working with told me that there was a dark-skinned

man but not a Mexican, waiting for me in Mexico. His aura was already combining with my aura in Canada (if you believe in that stuff). With this in mind, I had set off.

I arrived, found an apartment that would take dogs, moved my stuff in and hit the wall. CRASH: Down I went emotionally. What had I done to my life? How could I meet people when I was so scared to make personal friends? What on earth was I doing here? Panic set in.

After a few days of rest, on my sixth day in Mexico, I found an ad in the local English newspaper for a spiritual group that I had participated in for a number of years, in Canada. This, I thought, would help me meet some local gringos (English-speaking people) with whom I had something in common. By the time I found the building and room for the meeting, it had already started, so I slipped quietly into a chair at the back of the room.

Suddenly, I felt this wave of intense, continuous, loving energy hit me so hard, I thought I was going to fall off my chair. Even now, in writing about it, I get moved to tears remembering how strong it was. I looked around and saw this much tanned, handsome man in a Panama hat. Our eyes connected and he looked away quickly. Something inexpressible passed between us in that moment such that

I would never be the same again, ever. I continue to be true to that moment to this day because of its profoundly personal nature. The energy made a deep, lasting impact.

At home that night, I still felt waves of this man's energy coming to me and without even talking to him, I was hooked. Was this the mystery man about whom I had been foretold?

Two nights later, he invited me out for coffee after another meeting and this is when I hit the wall again. For starters, I was about four inches taller than he was but I wasn't going to let that stop me. As we talked, I learned more and grew more horrified. He smoked cigarettes, he smoked pot, he had had too many marriages and he lived in a place with no electricity and giant spiders. That did it. With my arachnophobia, I thought there's no way. Wave or no wave, this was just too much to take in. Then he leaned over and kissed me. A huge jolt went through my body and I was sure he felt it also.

Then he said, "When am I going to meet your dogs?" In my mind, I pictured rolling around on my bed with him and two dogs pouncing on us and said, "Not tonight."

My prince leased a small hotel, restaurant and bar in Yelapa, a secluded fishing village on the bay that was past the end of the road where the gringo meets the jungle. This was not my idea of heaven at the time. Paradise, with a price. It would require me to face my worst fears up close and personal every day. No thank you.

Yet I did see heaven in his soft, aquamarine eyes that were so sad and burdened with grief, my heart then and there committed to removing the pain and bringing in joy. I could feel the kindness in his gentle soul and knew that he had never met anyone who really understood and related to him totally.

Going back to his small rental home, we talked non-stop and then things started to get physical. I was reluctant to do much more than kiss. I had been celibate for several years and wasn't about to be a one-night stand. Still though, the attraction was overpowering: the connection felt right.

Then he quietly said, "Why don't you just surrender to the experience?"

It took me less than a minute to reply, "Yes, why don't I?"

That sealed the deal. It was perhaps the best love-making I had ever experienced because the connection made us like one being. I completely surrendered to the experience of loving Jack then and there. It remains true for me to this day, now twenty-one years later.

I knew I was home but how on earth was I going to live there? Even worse, since I'd felt the depth of his love before even meeting him, I thought how on earth was I ever going to live without him now? I felt trapped in a lethal web. And then it got worse.

~

Wait a minute. Hold on. This is Skippy, saying -- wait just a sec. I can see where this is going and I have to interject to present my side before ceci biases you with hers, justifiably so in her mind. I wanted you to meet her, not get swayed by her. That will happen anyway, as we go along.

Now you have to understand that knowing I'd end up in the tropics, I'd looked constantly for the love of my life to be with me when I went. In spite of my search, that never happened and despite my several marriages, none

came with me when my time came. I was already heartbroken from the effort and had pretty much cashed in trying for 'The One.' Give me the woman on a one-week vacation.

Yes, I got that blast the first seconds of being in the same room. Of course, I didn't tell *her* that for two years. She came with a scary, serious, powerful energy. I wasn't about to give her any more advantages. I was, on one hand, afraid she'd consume me but at the same time committed to her spirit. Quite a dilemma right from the start.

Please understand that I needed to know for sure if this was the right woman for me, and, of course, I had to put it to the test. Apart from that, I'm not the least bit defensive about this part of the story. So now I feel comfortable about turning you back to ceci.

~

Ceci -- It got worse. Over the course of seven years of knowing each other, most of my major insecurity buttons were repeatedly pushed. As a therapist, specializing in couple work, I realized that we had all the major challenges of couple hood in these first few years: other women,

alcohol abuse, financial ruin, several moves and major health challenges bordering on life or death, cultural and climatic adjustment. And for me all along, there was learning to live with my worst nightmares, that is: giant spiders, scorpions, huge snakes, and insects up the wazoo of every description. Needless to say, I was overwhelmed and on the brink of leaving at least 50,000 times. As a Canadian girl, this was way over the top.

Somehow just when I was truly at the point of giving up, Jack would say or do something that made it all right again. He made it clear he wanted me to stay.

However, the original dilemma still stood. How can I live with him and how can I live without him? It got resolved because Jack taught me how to love gently and unconditionally. I was a willing pupil.

From that point, I lived with him (albeit in spirit now) because I can never leave *no matter what happens.* Our relationship deepened when he began to tell me about Skippy and Jonathan. He had never confided this to anyone before. Immediately, I could feel the desire to capture his words and knowledge on paper together. Consequently, we started this book. He loved it when I called him Skippy as it brought him full circle to his life's truth. His search was

over. Over time, I grew to know the inner Skippy intimately.

One amazing thing began to happen in that I gradually was learning to live without fear. What saved me from my terror of multiple-legged critters was Skippy's innate and educated knowledge of them. He had degrees in Biology, Zoology, Entomology, as well as Psychology and told me riveting stories of the natural world. Every day was a new nature lesson when something crawled, flew or slithered into our cabin. He would always catch it saying, "Hi guy." Then he proceeded to tell me the order, species, genus and their habits. I was fascinated.

Skippy explained that everything has its season. When the elephant beetles came the first time, I was appalled. Males were huge with a long two-pronged horn on the head. Both sexes lived underground, as larvae, for seventeen years. Then, after they go through their metamorphosis, emerge altogether solely to mate. They rarely ate, just mated and died.

The male's horn is used to come up behind a mating couple and flip the mounted male off by his genitals. Then he gets on her. If the poor guy that got flipped off, lands on

his back, he's a goner. They get brain damage and die after a short time.

There was a particular tree on the path to the hotel restaurant where they liked to frequent. So almost every night during elephant beetle season, Skippy would find one on its' back and carry it to our table. Being very docile critters, Skippy was able to give his nature talk about them to lots of people, helping them hold him. They could fly but seemed quite content to be the center of attention. In no time, I was no longer fearful and could actually appreciate their unique beauty.

He taught me that knowledge is power, as well as that these critters help raise our awareness of being prepared if you do encounter one. With alertness, you don't need the fear. For example, if you never put your hands or feet where your eyes haven't been and always wear shoes at night, you don't need to fear the scorpion. Skippy has taught me how to catch one or kill one if necessary. After several years here, unlike lots of people, I've never been stung, thank God, because of these few simple instructions. It's doing it every day that makes it second nature here in the tropics.

Fortunately, for the rest of it, I thought I was ready but I was woefully wrong. With my professional knowledge, I was skilled in dealing with living relationship issues so that helped a lot. I was experienced enough in life to recognize a powerful connection when I felt it that wouldn't ever go away. And I just deeply loved Skippy. But he and the environment tested my endurance to the max.

Today I know that the giant spiders are called concla. 'Amblypygid' is the official order and their scientific name. It is in the class *arachnids* but it is not actually a spider, just part of the family tree. It's a good guy because it eats scorpions, cockroaches, crabs and other nasty things, but it still looks like something Steven Spielberg could use for his Alien movies. It can grow up to the size of a large dinner plate and it has two very large spiked, scary-looking, modified mouthparts with which to seize its prey. It would scare the heck out of newcomer guests to Skippy's hotel. He had to tell them it's a good guy and every room is furnished with them at no charge. Some guests choose to check out early to go back to the Sheraton but then they probably shouldn't be here anyway.

We have a saying here that this place is only for the right folks who can appreciate it or they'd all be living

elsewhere already. As a measure of my progress with my personal arachnophobia, I can actually look at one of these spiders close up without freaking out. That's major progress for me, who up until now couldn't handle our tiny Canadian ones.

I'm still caught in a lethal web today but not like the paralyzed spider. It's a web of my own choosing and I'm learning to walk on the dry parts of awareness and avoid the sticky sections that arouse fear. With this approach, I won't get caught in my own web of fear and ignorance. I can be with my man, face my worse terrors and be stronger for it. Skippy is more than worth it and the love we found together is the pearl.

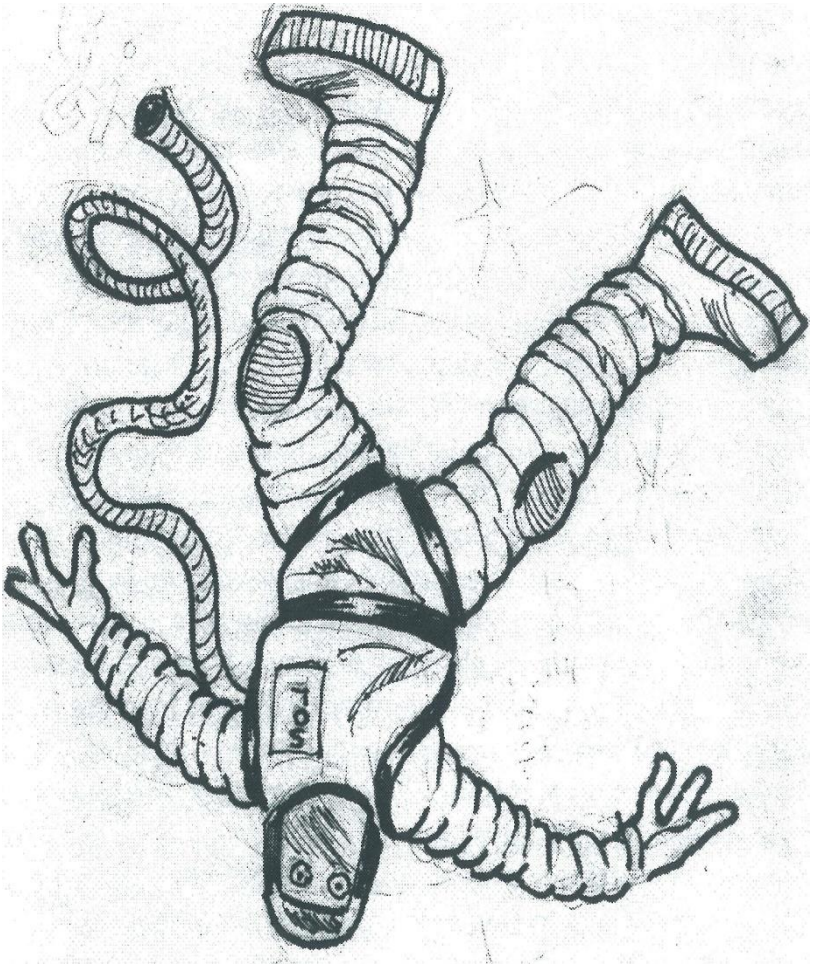
~

Skippy here -- because I like to have the last word. We also have found that the depth of our love and commitment threatens a lot of people. Their own issues with intimacy get triggered in our presence, it seems. Too bad for them. We weren't looking for their approval.

~

CHAPTER 3

Houston, we have a problem



I have had to admit that I may be one of the most difficult people to live with and to love, on the face of the planet. I always thought I was so easy, until now. I thought about calling this book 'The Autobiography of a brat-Christ,' but chickened out in the end. I'm not really comfortable with the brat-Christ idea, but ceci convinces me it's perfect. She can be very persuasive. Plus, she has the Master's degree in Counseling Psychology and has worked extensively with these issues. I must defer to her knowledge.

She says that brats appear to be ill-mannered kids who can't or won't conform, who act out against the pain and frustrations they feel and are frequently deeply sensitive, empathic people. They have minds of their own, don't feel like they have to fit in anywhere and are often profoundly lonely. They escape this existence through various means, creating a world of their own imagining. They tend to be thinkers who are tuned into another level of reality, usually radically different than the norm. They have misunderstood minds. I can relate to a lot of this, myself.

And come to think of it, that sounds a lot like Jesus, the Christ. He was the original non-conformist, in touch with a totally different perspective. A veritable tour de force of an extremely divergent thinker that the world is still struggling to comprehend. Stuff like -- love your enemies and turn the other cheek -- were radical concepts, especially in his time and still, now, in ours.

I'm not talking about the kind of brats that travel in packs and are violent and destructive, although many of them could fit in the description with extensive individual work. I'm talking more about the ones who ask questions constantly, won't respond to manipulation, controlling or intimidation and who won't bend to fit in for anything. They don't even want to, even if they're painfully lonely and alone. They just know at some level they are on the right track inside and that compromise on this is just not an option. It's a deep, intuitive, spiritual knowingness and now I see ceci's point that this is the same place Jesus was coming from.

Be an individual. Think for your OWN self. Live in the now. Don't worry about the future or clothes or food even. The Kingdom of Heaven is right here, right now, within your own self, in your own mind and heart.

To me, that sounds a lot like my wonderful inner world of Skippy riding freely on Jonathan and as co-creators with our Divine Source, all things are possible. It's very validating.

While ceci is probably right about this, on the other hand, I say I don't even know how to be anything else but relentlessly Skippy. Look at the natural world of critters. Can a shark be anything else than persistently a shark? Can a hummingbird? Can anything in wildlife be anything other than what it is? It seems to me that only humans have learned to do that. And I really haven't felt that it's improved the state of affairs in life at all. In fact, the opposite is true. Human ability to be something other than their REAL selves seems to be the crux of the problem.

People can be ruthless in the name of business, self-righteous under the banner of religion, two-faced, self-serving liars for political reasons and abusive in the guise of parenthood. They obsess about the past or future, get compulsive in their behavior to find security and get hopelessly addicted to everything from substances to jogging to chocolate. We are learning more about the mental illnesses triggering (or caused) by these conditions

all the time. It's startling to witness the numbers and variations of them in the general world population.

While Jesus was probably the most original thinker in human history, there have been many others like Gandhi, Buddha, Aristotle, Mohammed etc. But look at what we are told to believe they did to Jesus. How misunderstood, how eccentric was He? I'm not claiming to be on the caliber of Jesus's thinking, but even so, it makes you nervous to go public and visible with radical ideas. Yet where would we be now if Jesus hadn't spoken up and walked on the planet for a while? Even misconstrued and misquoted, He has influenced human thought probably more than anyone else.

I do not intend, though, to focus on the controversy that is Jesus. My purpose here is to examine the lifestyle issues that are diverse. Remember, He had a fairly devout community of twelve men that were his focus. The entirety of His attention was not one woman. It's a whole different ballgame now.

This intimacy thing in a relationship is the tough work now. How do two brat-Christ rugged individuals with minds of their own, live together and love each other when their minds are as different as a man and a woman? The scientist in me likens this to the odds being better at

finding a bubble of water in space than success in this area. It's possible but extremely rare.

I retreat, as always, to the natural world to find my role model for successful male/female bonding and what comes to mind are swans, doves and penguins. They mate for life if given the chance or the choice, living cooperatively, raising their young and being together until one dies. A 'swan song' actually refers to the grieving of the surviving swan for the death of its partner.

I've read that the state of human evolution now embraces serial monogamy -- having one serious relationship after another for up to several years. If true, we have something to learn from swans and doves because the problem of all this for us Skippy types is that it gets way too painful. Plainly speaking, it hurts too much to break up, leave the kids and the home or whatever and start over to have the same experience again. And *again*. And *again*.

Consequently, I've decided to make intimacy a major study in this project and boy, do I see a huge problem here, Houston.

- How *do* we get better at this LOVE thing?
- How *do* we love ourselves more?

- How *do* we love each other more?
- How *do* we love the natural world more?

These are going to be burning questions I return to over and over until hopefully we can all get it right. Don't get me wrong. I'm not going to preach to you. I know already people hate that. Like a parent lecturing with the pointy index finger wiggling in your face. UGH.

No, I just want to share some things ceci and I have found that work for us and probably figure out some new things too, since we're the ones focusing on the problem. That said, in truth, ceci and I have undergone our own challenging, frequently painful, trial and error process. Whenever we got it wrong, we went back to our spiritual resources and our commitment to each other to try harder. Mostly we just took it one day and one experience at a time, learning to live in the moment.

One thing we've learned though is that a relationship is only as strong as the weakest link. Both people need to be fairly robust individuals to be able to go the distance. This is a far cry from being controlling which is how most intimate relationships operate and thus fail.

The intention in a long-term bond is thriving as opposed to existing or surviving. That brings us back to this

brat-Christ concept. Seems like the time to share more thoughts on that.

Successful relating appears to require three main ingredients to evolve past serial monogamy to become God's Swans, none of which are easy to attain. We will revisit these frequently but, now, I'll just state what I think they are. From my humble perspective, the critical ingredients to a Swan relationship are: *Unconditional Love, Honesty (Truth) and Trust*. To be Swanlike is my personal goal.

The term brat-Christ means being true to the highest part of yourself. It means not compromising on the values you hold dear to your heart, no matter how tough it gets. And it means, expect trouble because people will react when you do you, regardless of the pressure to conform. You can't help offending someone coming from this place but with inner strength and time, you become more effective and less strident.

See, it's what we keep trying to do with the truth. Repress it; bury it; silence it; kill it. We do that all the time but the truth always has a way of coming back. Life will find a way.

My field, science, has a wealth of evolutionary ideas, with their reactionary examples for us to examine. They demonstrate these points from a non-threatening, historical perspective. Here are a few of them.

Nicholaus Copernicus (1473 – 1543) postulated, in his heliocentric model, that the earth was not the center of the universe, but that the sun was. The Catholic Church tried him for heresy, banning the model until 1758. He recanted rather than be crucified, but today we know Copernicus to be mostly right. He got some aspects wrong which have since been verified by ultra-modern technology, but the basic premise was correct.

Darwin (1809 – 1882), the originator of the biological theory of evolution, hesitated for many years before publishing his 'Origin of the Species.' When he did, he caught royal international flak. The church still battles him, posthumously, over the creation/evolution thing. Ordinary people, like myself, catch trouble for it too. Ten to fifteen million-year dinosaur fossils as well as 9000-year human remains have been found, but creationists ignore these annoyingly, inconvenient scientific truths.

In fact, my second biggest disillusionment with organized religion came at age twenty when I was teaching

in a church, trying to fit into my then wife's world. I was observed one day by the preacher when I was explaining that Darwin's theory of evolution and the Bible's story of creation were not actually in conflict. In Jesus's time, most people were illiterate, simple folk, so he used parables and storytelling as a way to communicate the issues and create a mood which made these ideas easier to accept.

The biggest example of this was the six days in which God created the whole world, resting on the seventh. It was intended to be a metaphor of the Creator and how powerful He is. This did not mean it was a scientific, mathematical account of how the world actually works. Time itself has been proven to be a man-made concept and does not actually exist, as we know it. There is only an eternal NOW which is good news for our purposes, as we can access an ever-present power to begin life anew every instant. In our self-created and consensual time, we track the ever-changing world which would occur whether we clocked it or not.

Albert Einstein (1879 -1955) wrote the groundbreaking theory of relativity, but he also provided a method of showing time as an illusion. By this time, though, his genius was recognized because it fit in with our world

views. He went to his death, however, personally regretting having shown how to split the atom. Man used that in Japan, ending WW2 and we live in fear of nuclear holocaust to this day. Einstein felt responsible and deeply troubled by his invention. It seems scientists rarely get a break.

It has been the likes of Stephen Hawking (1942 – 2018) to challenge the concepts of time and space. Two interesting fun facts about Stephen Hawking which tie together some amazing things:

- 1) he was born on the 300th anniversary of Galileo's death and he died on the 139th anniversary of Einstein's birth. These coincidences illustrate that time is circular with no beginning and no end, profoundly connecting us all. (Makes me wonder what all those great minds are doing up there on their higher, common mental plane) and,
- 2) he claimed to think in eleven dimensions. This verifies my inner knowledge that Jonathan is alive, well and foraging safely on his level, waiting for me to arrive.

In my case of trying to teach youngsters these difficult concepts, the preacher asked me, in no uncertain

terms, to leave the church. I was heartbroken that there was no room for an expanded perspective.

My first disillusionment with church dogma came at age six in Sunday school. The teacher said that if you don't accept Jesus as your savior in your life, you won't go to Heaven. Of course, young Skippy had to ask, "What about all those cave men and women who never knew Jesus? What happened to them?" "Sorry," he replied, "They all burned in hell." I was crushed.

You see, that's what happens. I was crushed at the age of six, only heartbroken by age twenty. The thought of all those innocent people burning in hell for eternity because they lived before Jesus did was a horrifying concept to young Skippy. I just knew that wasn't the way the God I already knew inside would do things, as a loving Father.

By age twenty, I was only heartbroken that others still didn't know it either. The damage had been done. Even at the age of six, I started to keep my personal knowingness about my view of God to myself. I clung tightly to my inner innocence of truth as I knew it and never let it go.

Please don't get me wrong. I have no claim of expertise on Jesus. This is a book, though, that centers on spirituality, by exploring insects and human love. Clearly, we will address a few touchy issues before we're through.

I subscribe to all people having the God of their *own* choosing. The original values of democracy still work for me: Liberty and Freedom, especially in personal beliefs, for all. There have been more wars in the name of religion than anything else and I don't intend to start any. The eternal message given to us by Shakespeare: 'this above all, to thy own self be true' still works. Just be prepared to be called a brat. One of my heroes, John F. Kennedy, who dared to put a man on the moon, would be proud. As would Martin Luther King, obviously a Skippy type, who said "I have a dream."

As far as I know, Jesus is the only one that we ever called Christ but I'll bet that if he showed up today, we'd kill him again.

~

We need to get back to our initial issue of how men and women can achieve their highest selves alone while as a couple but here, I want to take a small break.

To lighten the tone, I am going to ask ceci to tell you my favorite nature adventure story from her life before me. I always get her to tell it because I love to watch her face when she does. And it entertains our guests so much that I ask her to tell it often. Since I do not always have to be in the spotlight, I'll let her tell it in her own words now.

~

Ceci here -- In 1985, the year I received my Master's degree, my then husband's hospital job was privatized and contracted out to an HMO. With a large, one-time settlement, he desperately wanted to take a year off to travel around the world. Obviously, he wanted me to come with him. I was more interested in finding a job with my new qualifications, but my love of him and travel won out.

I had very little to do with the arrangements. It became my husband's obsessive passion and I was impressed by his attention to detail. There was only one aspect that I really took exception to. His life-long dream

was to see the mountain gorillas in Rwanda, Africa and climb Mount Kilimanjaro while there. I wanted to do neither. I was not a keen hiker like he was and I could see gorillas in a zoo. I had no particular fascination with them.

I tried to offer other alternatives for myself: stay in Athens where we were to be prior to Africa or go on to Israel, our next destination. But it was to be a six-week safari and he refused to leave me somewhere alone for that long. I had to face my fears head on. I felt that I would be overcome by giant bugs stepping off the plane. (Looking back, perhaps this was a foreshadowing of my future life with Skippy.)

Of course, it turned out to be one of the best parts of the whole year. Woman plans, God laughs again.

After the amazing wonders of the freely roaming animals crossing the Serengeti, the time for our trip into the jungle to visit the mountain gorillas soon came. By now, I had relaxed quite considerably. To my huge relief, I had not been overcome by insects at every turn.

The patrol guides, who were there to protect the gorillas from the ever-present poachers, told us in some

detail about how to behave when we found them but had only two very strict rules:

- Do not make direct eye contact as gorillas consider that a threat and may charge.
- If they do charge, it is probably a bluff but just in case, look away and get as low to the ground as possible.

Our group was divided up and we each had the guarantee of at least one visit. Picking up their trail from where they had been the day before, we came to the large family group. The lone, huge male silverback, slightly smaller females and all the young just hung and swung from the bamboo trees, while we sat about twenty yards from them. It was thrilling and it made me wonder who was watching whom. Mostly, it was the people, as the gorillas just did their natural thing, eating and grooming each other. Being slightly unnerved with no cage between us, it was nonetheless safe at our distance and we were spellbound.

The next day, to our delight, there was room for us to have a second visit. I wanted to go as the first trip was so positive. The family was a little more difficult to locate this time as they had moved further up the mountain into steep

terrain. Following their large night nests and their droppings, the patrol spotted them farther up the cliff. Looking up, I caught the eye of the male silverback. Transfixed, I forgot to look away. He made the loudest blood curdling sound I'd ever heard and started running fast on all fours down the cliff towards me. I instantly sensed I was in trouble.

Without so much as a thought, I dropped to the ground and lay face-down. I swear I was one with the Earth, but I could feel the size and heat of him as he sailed over my back. I can feel it even now by reliving the moment. I was truly in the *now* in that experience. It continues to be a peak moment of my life. He could have flattened me like a bug but didn't. It was a powerful bluff.

I stayed put until the patrol guide and my husband came to pick me up off the ground. The silverback was nowhere to be seen, but he had made his point. He was definitely the boss.

I would never enter a zoo again after this trip of seeing animals wandering free in their natural habitats.

~

Skippy here -- Oh, I love that mental image; I can live that moment of profound humility with ceci over and over again every time she tells it. Mother Nature is an awesome teacher.

On a final note for this chapter about how to love more successfully with your partner, I only want to make one salient point at this time.

Let's begin at the end, with our 'ideal' for love relationships, whatever form they may take. Many people these days are looking for a soulmate, or 'The One,' as it is best known. Thinking that this is the easy answer to long-term connections, I am sorry to say that I personally believe they are sorely mistaken.

Together ceci and I have over fifty years of clinical experience. I offer my best educated guess based on years of observation, which I am trained to do as a scientist, in addition to my own intimate perspective. Ceci, with her professional and private knowledge, agrees completely with me. We are both willing to hang our butts in the breeze, if necessary, no matter how vulnerable we feel about our position on these topics. Sometimes, a person needs to take a stand.

Unfortunately, a true soulmate bond is extremely intense, short-lived and chaotic. This is because both people will resonate on a similar vibrational frequency which we are not remotely trained to handle. It would be like looking in a mirror all the time with body dysmorphic vision. Similar to the misshaped mirrors in a fun house, we look at the image and it is distorted.

This is not fun, however. We don't like what we see which is when doubts and power struggles begin. Most couples cannot survive this part of their journey. One person emerges with the need to dominate and control. This is counter-productive to true Swan relationships which are based on kindness, mercy, equality and compassion.

There are just no real cases to observe to learn these interpersonal skills. Can you think of anyone who has survived the codependent power struggle stage, when they say this is their soulmate? If they are still together, a stalemate has been reached. Let's take one famous example to look at more closely.

Our great hopes for Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt were dashed when they divorced. Ironically, they held true to a personal pledge to not marry until it was legal for gays

to do likewise. They seemed to live together quite well. They adopted all those kids from different countries and we were in awe of their commitment. They maintained two high profile careers as well as that huge family. A few short years into their marriage, they split up with one of the ugliest divorce proceedings on record. Still unresolved, it is so horrible and mean with those kids caught in the middle. They came crashing down off the pedestals we had put them on.

Psychology tells us that the phenomenon of common law and marriage differences can be summed up by the following. Once married, old buried tapes of our family of origin models surface and unless we have done extensive work on ourselves, we will drown in these issues. Thus, the blame and shame games begin. Most people are totally unaware of this and as a result, look at the cause as their partner's fault. When they go on to experience the serial monogamous marriages, currently in vogue, then they can look back and see the pattern. The common denominator is them. They must take responsibility for it. Sadly, by this time, much damage has been done.

Not being trained by example, in our families of origin, we can only focus on what is wrong rather than

appreciate what is harmonious. It requires a complete paradigm shift to operate with your highest true self all the time, no matter what. That's what unconditional love means. It's the 'un' part that is hardest.

There's a British show on the Internet called 'Strictly Soulmates,' which looks at the issue of seeking for 'The One' to marry from fundamentalist religious faiths (Islam, Hindu, born-again Christian and Jewish, etc.) I dare you to watch it sometime. The combination of high expectations of perfection, with minute detail (height, weight, town they are from, depth of faith or whatever) and the familial/social pressure to marry are heartbreaking to behold. In all the shows, only one found a mate whom she married and the process of urgent seeking, for the rest, was complete desperation. Ceci sure would have rejected me for all the boxes she could not check by those criteria.

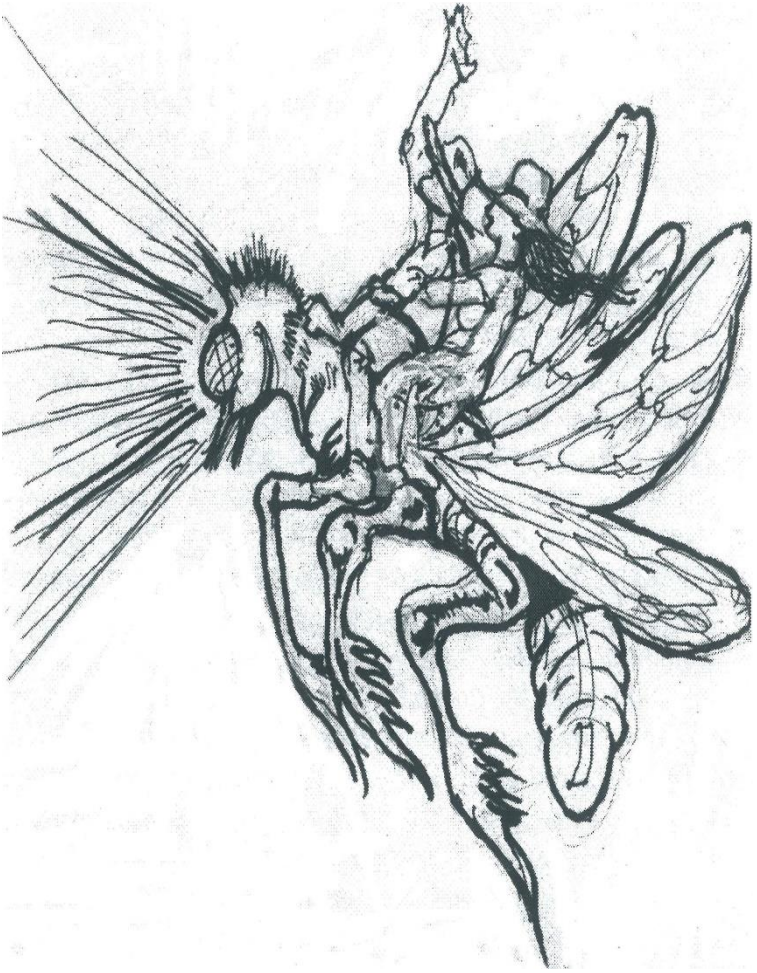
Our true bond was that spiritual exchange, as described in Chapter 2, 'Lethal web with giant spiders,' before we even met. A power greater than both of us brought us together and holds us there to this day. We were united for eternity not until death did us part. We are blessed.

Better to find someone you are mostly compatible with and learn to love the differences than be with a soulmate and have the intensity destroy both of you. Gradually, slowly and consistently, you come to learn how to love unconditionally rather than spontaneously combusting from a connection that is, by definition, overpowering. It's like putting your hand into the fire and keeping it there. You *will* get burned. Sorry, sad but true.

~

CHAPTER 4

Riding a Blinky



Since our main goal for successful loving is evolving into strong, robust individuals first, we need to focus on our own mental and emotional inner lives. I believe that the unlimited power of the mind is critical for this. The problem of mental illness, low self-esteem, grief, abuse and addictions compound this issue enormously and consequently, most of us are left without the solid foundation needed.

Some people can experience these concerns, get treatment and recover. Others live their lives out in quiet desperation or overt aggressive acts, resulting in incarceration. Either way, society pays a high price for these people, in institutional care or welfare dependency. There are millions of people being cared for by their society. Too often, people lose interest or motivation to improve their lives. What does that say about what they have to offer in a relationship?

We need to explore some aspects of the power of the mind to learn how to utilize its positive qualities and minimize its negative ones. Let's do this in a fun way to start with.

Here's how fantasy can work. Down here in the tropics, we have a lightning bug, actually a beetle, in the family Elateridae, commonly known as 'Click' beetles. It has two large green headlamps on each elytra (shoulder) that are bio-luminescent in the dark to attract a mate. When running across the floor, they resemble an XKE racecar with its headlights flicking on and off. That's why I call them 'Blinkys."

Fun fact about these critters: most beetles are brain dead within hours of falling onto their backs because they are too heavy to turn themselves over. These guys play dead for a while, then, swinging their many legs, 'click' at the middle and propel themselves up and over. Google it if you want to see it for yourself. You can hear the actual click.

Now, what would it be like to shrink yourself down to the size of an ant and hop on the back of one of these beautiful flying machines? What would you see? Think of flying high above the jungle with your own searchlights on at night, flashing at other beetles and looking for the proper response from a possible mate. You'd be cruising high over the coconut trees and searching through the bougainvillea. You'd be dodging insect-eating bats and night-flying birds. There's a flash. You move towards it and now it can be high

drama because, in some fireflies, there is a predatory species that mimics the green flash of other species and attracts them for prey. If the unwary beetle settles down to get laid, he might, instead, get eaten. Damn, I hate it when that happens.

On a human plane, most people remember the song, Puff the Magic Dragon, but may not remember what it's about. Puff was a Chinese dragon kite that was owned by a little boy and they played together in fantasyland every day. Then the little boy grew up and lost his ability to fantasize in the adult world. That's when he placed his kite in the top of the closet (called a cave in the song). Puff ceased to exist.

When our fantasy life is disconnected, we lose access to the highest vision for ourselves -- *our Swan-self* -- as we are calling it here. I believe that imagination is the instrument of our true spiritual self to enable us to live creative, fulfilling lives.

Imagination is the seat of original thought. Dare to dream and think BIG and then follow the dream to make it happen. Do the tough legwork. The sky's the limit. We have no idea what we are capable of achieving until we step outside our own limitations.

We are all familiar with stories of people moving beyond the socially sanctioned norms. For example, the Wright brothers were mocked and ridiculed for years, in the early stages, for daring to dream that man could ever fly. And today, you'd be hard-pressed to find someone who hasn't been somewhere in a plane.

You would have needed a sense of imagination to have painted the cave drawings recently found in Chauvet, France. Our ancestors did just that, 35,000 years ago, with artistic style, content and technique that is outstanding.

Now, why would cave men take the images of animals they see and even feel the *need* to draw them on walls deep inside a cave? Perhaps the answer is because it spiritually connected them. Aboriginals in Australia have done it as well as tribes in Africa and North America. Ancient Mayan, Aztec, Egyptian and Inca cultures have surpassed some of our artistic accomplishments to date. We still aren't really sure how they built those pyramids or the amazing ruins of Machu Picchu in Peru. Seems a heck of a waste for people who are spending eternity living in hell.

But it turns out that the power of the mind is only as positive and empowering as the thinker. Imagination is wonderful so long as it isn't negative. A fear-based person

will produce fear-based thinking. The low self-esteem caused by fright can be debilitating.

One night, ceci and I went swimming in the ocean after sunset. After just a few minutes, she had to get out of the water because her mind conjured up such scary images for her that she couldn't handle it. It was the ninety-foot squid in her mind that frightened her because hardly anyone sees the real one. Despite telling her there was probably nothing in there to hurt her, if she stayed away from the sea urchins and sting rays, I still supported her decision to leave. Overcoming the mental tormentors must be done gradually, slowly and compassionately.

Also, despite the work we had done in Chapter 2 on the concla spiders, when we had three one morning in our bathroom, ceci's knowledge of these good guys didn't serve her very well to use the facilities. Three of them just made her too uncomfortable in there. She recalled using an outdoor john at a relative's summer cottage, as a child that filled her mind with terrifying thoughts of what was down there. It felt like the monsters of her childhood were now living with her as an adult.

In an effort to help, I suggested reverse fantasy for her. "Imagine," I said, "being a spider with sensory organs

so sensitive as to be able to detect a cockroach or scorpion, scurrying across the floor on the opposite side of the room. It feels the vibrations coming its way before the roach is even close by."

I can't help but wonder what the concla thinks when it senses a six-foot human giant coming at him. It would be comparable to that scene in Jurassic Park where the people got stuck in the car due to a computer breakdown. They felt the impact tremor of the Tyrannosaurus Rex heading their way. How scary was that. Our poor spider would be terrified.

It didn't work for ceci and we moved to another cabin. Fortunately, as patron of the hotel, I can do that. I do have to admit these spiders are pretty awful looking. When they get as big as a dinner plate, well you can appreciate the problem.

Like the double-edged sword, imagination can serve and protect to get you out of tough situations or it can undermine and potentially destroy you in the same situations. As with many things in life, it's all up to *you*. However, we use fantasy all the time whether we realize it or not. If you stay in touch with your Skippy as an adult, you'll have control of it.

This is what fantasy means to me. It is literally the vehicle for the preservation of my sanity. It puts the world in my ball-court, not 'theirs' –- 'them' -- all the people, that is, who would put me in a slot like crazy, insane, psychotic, delusional or worse. It lets me access my *POWER* -- the power of *MIND*. It makes me remember: *THERE IS ALWAYS ANOTHER WAY TO LOOK AT EVERYTHING.* I can't be bound. I can't be imprisoned. I exist in my mind. I am *FREE*. You will learn more about this awesome, accessible power as we continue. But, first, let's find an example of this phenomenon.

Remember the movie 'Shawshank Redemption?' Tim Robbins' character illustrated this point beautifully and he shared it with the other inmates. When he intentionally put the opera on and turned up the volume in the locked warden's office, he and all the men, mentally, went over the prison walls. Soaring with the uplifting sounds, they experienced a new kind of freedom. Of course, he paid a high price for that of two months in solitary confinement. I believe for him it would be easier time as he reflected back to that peak moment. The power of his mind would have been strong enough to handle the punishment. No doubt, he anticipated the warden's reaction.

To 'them' -- the ones who will no doubt slot me after this -- I will say this once. I don't care what you think of me. You are entitled to your opinion and hopefully, you'll keep it to yourself. If not, I'll forgive you. I can only pray that you listen before you judge and condemn. Hopefully we are all capable of learning something new.

Fantasy/imagination (or whatever you want to call it) has gotten a bad rap over the years. It's mainly only for kids now. What's that about? Don't knock it if you haven't tried it lately. I insist on one guideline -- your fantasy life should never hurt you or another living being, *if you are coming from your Swan-self.* Keep that in mind and have fun with it.

FUN -- there's a whole topic in itself. Have you had any joy lately? I mean, the really, contagious, belly-laughing kind of pleasure? Fun is good. A lot of people have forgotten how to do this. Life, as adults, gets so darn serious. Fantasy is the most excitement you can have with your clothes on. It's portable. It goes where you go. And it's cheap. Free in fact.

Are we having *FUN* yet?

It can't be any surprise to you by now that most of my personal fantasy fun comes from the natural world of critters. Nigel in his 'Wild, Wild World' on Discovery channel says: "Creatures are not just my life. They are my world." Go Nigel. Me too.

But it doesn't take a rocket scientist to observe that in our high-tech, fast-paced lives, people are pushing the natural world out more and more. Ceci's Dad often said: "you can't change Mother Nature, you just irritate the heck out of her." He's right. She will find a way to come back with a vengeance. Global warming, ozone layer and rainforest depletion, extinction of species, etc., -- to name a few -- are a result of our alienation from the planet we are a part of and all its multiple realms.

Remember Joni Mitchell's 60's song, "They paved paradise and put up a parking-lot." We're still doing it.

Since we are still fighting over borders, religion, natural resources or whatever, we're on the verge of nuclear threat and destroying ourselves. But guess what? If we did manage to do that, the meek invertebrate critters would still inherit the earth.

The meek among us are the cockroaches, scorpions, ants, termites and other small insects. They've already been here through everything Earth's history has done to them and ourselves. They'll still be here after the humans have gone.

For example, 64 million years ago, be it a comet or an asteroid, something impacted Earth in the Yucatan and within a year, the major plants became extinct which wiped out the plant-eaters, like my pal, the Triceratops. Subsequently the carnivores went because they fed off the herbivores. The dinosaurs were gone. Only the smallest of insect creatures lived through it because they thrive on carnage and there was a lot of it around.

We have a choice: 1) put up more parking lots, covered malls, walled communities with more security technology for our homes and cars or, 2) we start finding ways to embrace Mother Nature rather than attempt to change her. There are infinite ways to do this.

Watch Discovery channel. Learn some biology and study critters. Go out for walks in the fresh air. Be kind to animals and learn how they operate to create balance and harmony for themselves in their instinctive ways. Taking a picture is preferable to taking an animal's life-force. Whale

watching and swimming with dolphins are great examples of how to move in that direction.

Reverence for Nature is reverence for life itself. Why does it take a September 11th event to drive the point home that mostly we have very little reverence for life itself? It seems to require loss of a loved one or our homeland security being threatened to get our attention.

I could spend an eternity studying nature and still not get it all done. There is so much here to learn about. Try even one aspect. Dianne Fossey devoted her life to gorillas and died doing it. Jane Goodall has spent her life on chimpanzees. A colleague of mine died while on his quest to find out more about scorpions. One person could just never know it all even about one critter. It'd be like coming to the end of the Internet. It won't happen.

Perhaps we could try being a little meeker in the presence of this awesome, mysterious, multi-arrayed thing called life. It's way bigger than any one of us and we could use the help to learn how to get in balance ourselves. Maybe we need to begin by remembering that we are part of Nature also -- would we go so far as to admit we are animals? Jimmy Buffett seems to think we are "monkeys with PhDs." My hero.

How can I get across that critters are profoundly sensitive, alert and aware, living only in this moment with a mentality of 'can I eat it or will it eat me?' We can learn from the presence of such intense awareness (without the threat of the hunt). They can't afford to tune their world out or they're history. They are something else's lunch.

For most humans, this is hardly their primary thought of the day. As we rise to *our Swan-selves*, this becomes even less of an issue. Being supersensitive, alert to life and possessing heightened awareness of our world becomes the new adventure. It is not easy to live in a competitive, greed-ridden human world of denial. Opposition and resistance are rampant. People get threatened by the innocent honesty of the Christ-self in us as we return to being childlike to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

But what is our option? The eternal child in me doesn't even have a choice. I still feel pretty beaten up by this human world when I watch CNN and see how many varied ways humans just don't have a clue about what they are really doing to themselves, each other and the globe.

It reminds me of a joke with a lesson I know, to get back to a fun note. There are three categories of people:

those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who wonder what happened. Please let's not be left wondering what happened after a nuclear or environmental disaster. We are doing it to ourselves, the animals and the planet. According to the Bible, mankind was given dominion over nature. This means to be its steward and care for it responsibly not control and overpower it.

How are you creating harmony in your private realm on this day? It's not too late for us to seriously begin, but it could reach a critical point where it is.

A grassroots movement is necessary. Join the wave of thinking globally and acting locally. Embrace change at your doorstep. Be an example in your home.

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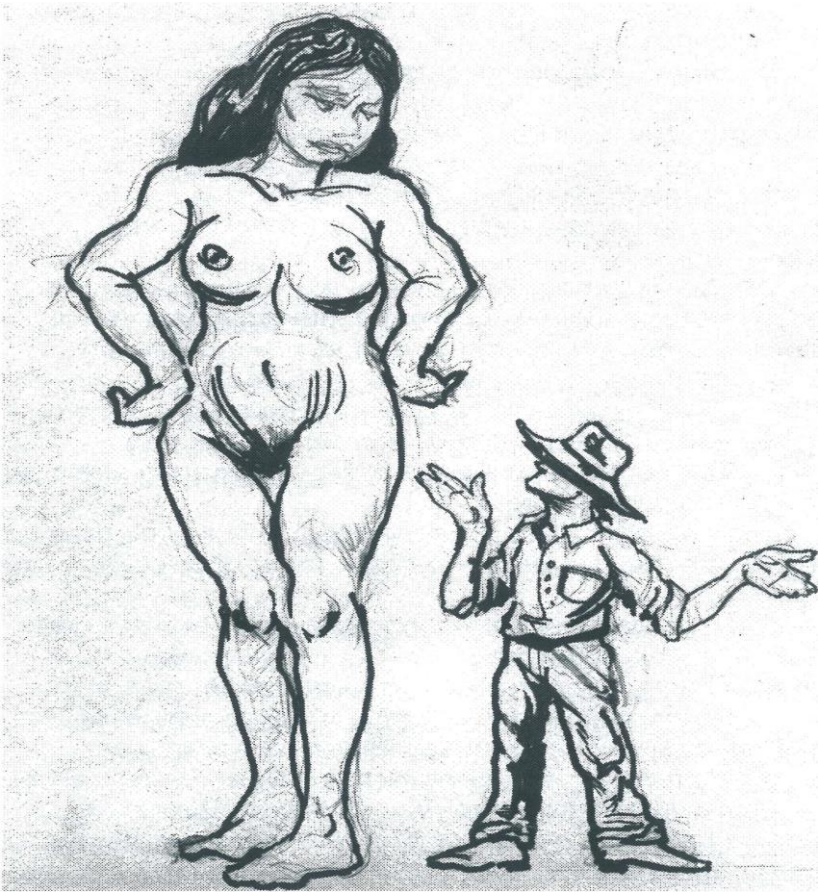
CHAPTER 5

Beware Women



Guys, you know we have to face facts. In the natural world, for the most part, *females* rule. We are plagued worldwide with mosquitoes, but did you know that only the female bites and sucks blood? She does it for the nutrients and to incubate her eggs. And don't they irritate us to no end. Male mosquitoes suck plant sap. No problem there unless you are a plant.

In the spider family, almost without exception, the female is larger than the male, often five or more times so. Just as often, they eat the male after mating. The female cockroach, along with many other species of insect, need mate only *once* in a lifetime. She stores the sperm packet and can fertilize herself any time when survival conditions warrant. How powerful is that?

To make things more complicated, take a fish like a rasse, where the population can switch from male to female depending on the needs of the species. Worms also go through both cycles, altering when necessary. Nature seems to favor female advantage for survival.

Since I am an entomologist, most of my illustrations come from the invertebrate world. The most striking of this female dominance comes with the families of termites, ants

and honeybees. All these insects are totally devoted to their queen. The colony revolves around the queen. They tend, feed, fan and pamper her in the continuous egg production. They even take away her feces because she's so full of eggs, she can't move.

But, up into the animal kingdom, while the male lion may have a great roar, it's the females who hunt most of the kills to care for the young.

How did we ever get so macho when the natural world constantly tells us a different story?

As young Skippy, I was raised in a very female nurturing environment. I had two mothers. My real mother was a strong-willed, nature-loving, authoritarian type, who was two balanced beautifully by my other mother. She was an African-American nanny I had from the day I was born through to adulthood.

She was a gentle, soft, caring, demonstrative soul. She had more common sense in her little finger than anyone I've ever known. Very early on, my mothers taught me a deep appreciation for nature and women.

Since I had such powerfully positive women to get me started with the opposite sex, I have maintained a high

regard for women throughout my life. In fact, I genuinely like and love women. I believe I understand them.

A joke I know suggests that not many men do. A man found a bottle on the beach and upon rubbing it, an old, tired genie popped out. The genie complained that he'd been so busy granting wishes to people on this beach that he was worn out, but he'd grant a simple, easy wish to this guy, if the man could think of one. The man replied that he'd always wanted to go to Hawaii, but since he got airsick and seasick, he asked the genie to build him a bridge to get there. Horrified, the genie said that was far too complicated and difficult a wish, since Hawaii was 2,000 miles away. "Think of another wish," the genie insisted. Shortly, the man answered with the request that he'd always wanted to understand women. If the genie could do that, he'd be happy. The genie instantly responded, "How many lanes do you want on your bridge?"

I don't think many men understand women or even like them, often objectifying them. While I've had my time enjoying women for less than lofty spiritual reasons, for the most part, women are my true friends. The Skippy in me is a deep-feeling, empathic, sensitive guy and I relate to the outlook of women in a different way than most men, I

think. In my experience, the emotionalism of women opens the door to greater spiritual awareness. It is energy in motion, but it needs to be disciplined in order to access our higher realms.

Too often, men *and* women are out of control with their feelings and so we tend to want to avoid the whole area by living in our heads. It just doesn't work that way -- to throw out an entire aspect of human functioning in order to stay in our comfort zones. Better both sexes learn to deal with their emotional female side, appropriately.

This is a tough chapter to write, but ceci insists on it and since she's the female here, I'll defer to her expertise on this topic. She says that in her life experience as a woman, she's been appalled by the attitudes of contempt, exploitation and abuse between men and women. How do we get to be best friends together? How can we possibly relate as equals? "Where is the love?" our good friend, George, always asks.

The brat in us is the strength to stand up for yourself and that the Christ in us is the truth that you stand up for: that is the key to successful relations.

Men and women can support each other to be unique and to actualize their dreams. Allow your highest vision to manifest, no matter what your sex, age or other characteristics. This is bringing through the Christ consciousness that is available to all of us.

Let me to explain it this way. It's like we all have a link to the higher consciousness or Christ consciousness. This is the source of inspiration for all our more advanced thinkers and for all of us, if we can reach that high. While we can never sever the link totally, we can turn down the heat and intensity to that of a pilot light, so it is barely accessible.

We don't dilute it by being true to ourselves, but rather, by being trapped in various roles placed on us by society and accepted by our need to fit in, win approval from significant others and to conform. Our capacity to be individuals, our brat in other words, turns up the intensity of the pilot light such that the fire and warmth coming through, then, is our Christ consciousness. Our power is magnified, our energy increases, our joy abounds and we are infinitely more effective. The brat is vindicated.

What is essential for this quantum leap forward in authentic power is that the brat in us has to find a stable,

secure, supportive environment from which to operate. But unconditional love is a tough challenge for humans, it seems. Remember, the tough part is the 'un' part. That means there are *no* conditions in which I will stop my love for you.

It seems there is a point beyond which people are unable to extend unconditional love and that is when loss is imminent. Loss of spouse, loss of life, loss of security, loss of something we perceive as valuable and bang, you smack into a wall blocking your ability to continue to love.

If, for example, your highest vision was to climb Mount Everest and you die from the attempt, then my support of your ambition shows the extent of my unconditional love for you. Even if it removes you bodily from me, I'll uphold your decision. Obviously, I would grieve the physical loss.

Spiritually, though, I hold the truth that our love would transcend bodily confines and that, at some point, we would be together again. That's *tough loving*, as opposed to tough love (meaning you have to meet certain conditions for me to continue to put up with you): another temporary lesser of two evils *until we can operate from our Swan-selves.* The popular current approach of tough love

seems to be just another way of putting up walls between people. It has served its' place as part of our evolution of relationships but now we need more progress.

As your partner in Christ consciousness, I'm aware that I don't need a body to relate to you spiritually. We are spirit and spirit transcends the physical. Not many people think this way, it seems. I know this to be true because many important people to me have crossed over. Both of my mothers, my father, some dear friends and a beloved then wife are on the other side and while I miss them dearly, I still live daily with their presences around me.

They are more than just memories to me. They continue to exist, on another plane, like Jonathan does and I have an ongoing, albeit different relationship with them. I intuitively *feel* them. Why is it so hard for people to accept that life goes on after death? Einstein proved it with his discovery that energy is neither created nor destroyed but merely transformed. And we are energy, folks. This is for all of us, not just psychics and mediums. *Only if we are open to it*: that's the clincher.

Since I don't want to get distracted by the issue of death at the moment, (it's a big subject that will be tackled in the next book by ceci), I'll refocus on what it takes for a

man and woman to live and love together in unconditional love. Just ponder the concept of 'no' conditions for a moment.

If that's too tough, first think of some of the conditions we set up in order to discontinue the love: infidelity; poor choices in career, friendship or business, addictions, money problems, boredom etc. The list is endless. The popularity of 'The Seinfeld Show' was largely based on this very premise of being so picky about people right from their first impressions that almost no one had a partner.

You know, our parents' generation is hardly the model of intimate relations, but what they did have was staying power. Their sense of commitment ran deeper than our Baby Boomer generation who 'when the going gets tough, the tough get going.' Over time, the playing field of life levels out and problems acquire a different perspective. We seem to have lost that knowledge. Too often, we bolt at the early signs of danger.

Unconditional love demands staying power. It means staying the course *no matter what happens*. Now perhaps you need a time-out or a Sabbatical from your partner, from time to time, to regroup and revive your own

sense of individuality. You stay committed nonetheless, returning with new energy and a new perspective. We have to remain robust individuals first, not let ourselves become burnt-out shells of humanity.

It can be tough sometimes *not* to get drawn into someone else's whirlwind of pain, grief or despair. Can you say that you have that kind of commitment to your relationship? It bears repeating: to stay no matter what happens. Well, it seems that, if not, you can't reach *your Swan-selves* alone or together. Sorry.

You'll find yourselves on that serial monogamy treadmill, going nowhere. While it's true I haven't seen a lot of this loyalty around, I still aspire to the belief that given this sort of environment and attitude, the brat-Christ in all of us would blossom and thrive rather than choose to self-destruct. We'd learn the ways to truly connect and commit to one another.

I have unbounded optimistic faith and, hey, folks, we really want this. It's what we're searching for and the answer is to find a way to go deeper into *yourself*, to overcome whatever blocks there are to loving, *in you*.

- Do I hold my partner back from climbing Mount Everest because I'm afraid of death and being alone?
- What does that say about my limitations or beliefs about life after death?
- What will happen to him and to us, if he never does this because of my fears? I can already feel the resentment building and it's just an imaginary example.

In truth, the only person you can possibly hope to control in life is yourself and that's a fulltime job, *if you are doing it right*. Please get out from under the delusion that you can control anyone else because it really never happens. It may seem to for a while, but ultimately it turns out to be an illusion. Sooner or later, there's a backlash to controlling someone. They rebel -- perhaps in illness or suicide even. What a great way to get back at someone. You may never recover from the guilt.

How do you recognize a higher vision from a self-destructive image? It seems that the higher visions we hold for ourselves never go away. Remember ceci's then husband who had always wanted to see the mountain gorillas and climb Mount Kilimanjaro: she overcame her

lack of interest and enormous fears to share it with him also. Her reward was a peak experience and a great nature story. It was also a huge bonding experience for them as a couple. That was clearly fulfilling a higher vision. 'By their fruits, you shall know.'

While we may have the ability to deny, repress, avoid, or postpone them, ultimately it will be easier and more fulfilling despite the difficulties, to go with the flow of our vision rather than fight against it. Find your dream. Find your courage and dare to be yourself. What else is worth doing with the one and only life you know you have? Give your partner the same freedom.

Skippy and ceci found each other because I followed my vision to live in the tropics and she followed her intuition to move to Mexico. Of course, people thought we were crazy to drop our secure lives for the unknown. We wondered about it ourselves. These dreams, however, never left us.

In developing and maintaining a joint higher vision for ourselves, we've had seven tough years of bumping up against the brats in both of us. It doesn't come easily, unfortunately. I want it my way -- she wants it hers. We went through competition, conflict, and two minor

separations. We dragged ourselves and others through the confusion of exploration and the turmoil of learning true union in unconditional love. Come to think of it -- where was it ever written that it would be easy? Since we are doing research for the book, we hope all relevant, affected significant others can forgive us our trespasses.

The question we've gotten better at asking is "Is this desire coming from my higher self or not?" The vision of the highest self is a positive, fulfilling, expanding one that usually serves many others including the individual.

When you really love yourself, you want the best for yourself and others. Harmlessness is one of the main components of spiritual life. Do no harm to self or others. A higher vision wouldn't even include self-destructive tendencies, although they frequently involve taking great risks to experience life more fully.

I have lots more to say about women as we go along, but for now, I'll go hang my butt in the breeze with this. I think that what men don't understand about women is really what they don't understand about themselves, as men. Emotionalism, intuition, psychic transmission and reception as well as higher vision are all accessed through the creative functioning of our *female right brain*. These

qualities tend to scare the heck out of most men. But I can't help thinking that all those females in nature must be telling us something. When are we going to get it?

Oh, by the way, for people bothered by this sort of stuff and I *know* you are out there -- ceci is the one who insists on mostly spelling her name with a small 'c.' No offense is intended to the gentler sex -- don't give *me* grief for it. She's hardly a meek, wallflower type and it's not done in submission to me or anything like that. What a joke that would be.

She says it's *her* way of reminding *herself* that she still has much to learn about all this. I think they call it humility. For my part, I really couldn't care one way or another. I *never* forget I have much to learn. I don't really need the technical reminder. I've observed women tend to like these types of symbolic gestures. That's noteworthy.

Go figure. This is an example of why I said 'Beware Women.' They have a unique spiritual perspective we can learn from. Even if you watch their every move, you'll be hard-pressed to understand them. Makes life interesting, though.

Yet, where would we be without them? Ponder that for a moment.

Nowhere, because we wouldn't exist.

~

CHAPTER 6

No Compromise

Some people say I want it *all*. Others say I want it all right *now*. I say I want it *all right, right now*, because I believe that with God, all things are possible. No compromise. Sorry. Truth's like that.

I hear this talk about the holy grail of compromise as being the big problem solver in relationships in life. Since decision-making is a huge part of human relating, I figure I'd better address this up front and continue to identify it throughout. Compromise, let me think a moment. Does that mean if I really want something badly enough and only get half of it, I'll be happy? If I always wanted to go to Africa, but only got a ticket to France, I'd go, "oh, blissful day." I really don't think so.

Let's look at infants for a sec. This stage is the closest we ever are to our true natures. Babies want what they want when they want it. Is that a bad thing? Is a starving child happy with only half a bottle? Does she let you know if she's not? When did that become a bad thing -- knowing what you want and really need? *Instinctively.*

Seems to me right away we've learned how to be experts at not being happy because we've been brainwashed that we can't have what we really want

anymore. Often ceci asks me, 'are you happy?' If the answer is 'no,' she asks, 'what do you need to be happy?' Then, together, we figure it out and make it happen, if we can. Sometimes just identifying it helps, even if it can't happen today. What's so hard about that? I'm a reasonable guy. My expectations aren't outrageous. But I do happen to know what makes me content.

Let's look at this on a grander scale and start with our government. Politics, what else? As I have followed politics closely for decades, I feel relatively qualified to comment on this topic. One of the highlights of my life was meeting John F. Kennedy, as a member of the Young Democrats Party. Also, since I am a native born American, I feel entitled to my opinions about my country.

Let's start with the top job, POTUS. This is the primary reason why I wouldn't want to be President of the United States. Why not President? *Because the system sucks.*

Here's a major example of frustration from that world. The President gets a Senator and a Congressman to introduce a good bill that is the *right* thing, like an anti-discrimination law. Before it gets out of the House committee, some self-serving member tacks on an amendment that has nothing to do with the proposal

written such as a new highway through his state. Others can add their agendas to it as well. When it gets out of committee with the alterations attached and is passed by the House and the Senate, it reaches your desk for the Presidential signature. Now, you're faced with either signing it *all* into law or vetoing your own legislation in order to kill the extra revisions. It happens every day. Wouldn't that drive *you* nuts?

The government system of the United States has gotten far away from what the original Founding Fathers intended for us. Although very active in my youth, it made me so crazy that I had to drop out. However, I still send in my absentee ballot because I believe that if you don't vote, you can't bitch and I still need to have my say about it. Can't we get back to our original values, folks?

Then, what happens to compromise?

- Can you bargain with truth, equality, freedom, or human rights?
- Can you make a concession on your highest vision?
- Seems to me that if something is really important to the highest part of your being and

the desire for it never goes away, there is no compromise for that.

- If something's not that important, you can take it or leave it, so there's no compromise there either. Compromise just does not work.

Since truth is inherently ethical, coming from its own claim to right and wrong, we don't have to worry about the system collapsing, if we *really* stick to it. In fact, I always thought that's what the legal system was supposed to focus on exclusively. Truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help us, God.

Now, do we *truly* mean that? We pay lawyers bazillions of dollars every year to distort or deny the truth to get people off who know they are guilty. What would happen to the system if we just stayed with the truth all the time? Where would all the defense lawyers go if people only spoke from their consciences? What would happen to all those lawyer jokes?

If people could accept that all their inner thoughts are known and recorded by our *Creator*, they would realize that only the truth would set them free. This is the reality, even if they spend their lives in prison, ironically.

Victor Frankl, who wrote 'The Search for Meaning,' while in a Holocaust concentration camp, discovered this to be the case. His body was imprisoned but not his mind, because he realized this horror was manmade, not God created. All he had to do was hold true to that thinking. His focus was 'what are my circumstances asking of me?' He was not a victim despite being victimized.

Also, there is karma. *Believe it or not*, what goes around comes around. You are the beneficiary of your own positive thoughts or the recipient of your own negativity. If you hate someone, their life goes on, but you can become physically ill from it, to say nothing of the state of your spirit.

Karma doesn't need you to believe in it any more than gravity does. Gravity doesn't decide to stop you halfway through a fall off a fifty-foot cliff. It does its thing and takes you all the way to the earth. There are physical and spiritual laws that we need to learn how to use, yet they operate regardless. It's more powerful to flow with the stream with empowering knowledge than to go against it: that is what we are doing when we are ignorant or discount these laws.

Forgiveness is a big spiritual law as well. We forgive to heal ourselves rather than the person that did us wrong. Keeping hate in your heart closes *you* off from those healing, spiritual forces and deadens *you* inside. It, also, functions whether you like it or not or even know about it.

None of these things involve compromise: not karma, not forgiveness and not the power of your thoughts, to mention just a few. Your spirit keeps track of everything and if you are living according to these laws, you have no worries. You *are* in big time trouble if you consistently ignore them. But because our birthright is free will, it is on each of us to choose and exalt in or suffer the consequences.

I am not so naïve as to ignore that there are horrendous cultural differences that must be addressed. Realities such as arranged or forced marriages, honor killings, poverty, racism, sexual trafficking, nuclear arms races etc. are just a few of the accepted practices in some cultures. This is why I believe we need a global, spiritual, enlightened approach to start with, so we can transcend these issues gradually and meet on a level plane.

Just as English is mostly accepted as the universal language and the U.S. dollar is the currency against which

all others are measured, we can learn a higher spiritual dialogue to wade through these diversities. It is urgently compelling that we persist.

At this point, I want to issue a warning. There have been secret societies, operating for generations through special bloodlines such as the Freemasons and the Illuminati, who have their own agendas for a new world order. Their intention is to dominate, control and enslave everyone to their own benefits. The Federal Reserve banks, originated by the Rothschilds, are an example of their wide-reaching influence. The Church of Scientology is one of the most prevalent, destructive brain-washing cults that exists today. Google it and find out for yourself. Secrecy is the main way they operate, even within their own organization. It is a massive money-laundering scheme in the name of religion.

This is *completely* in contrast where I am coming from with global cooperation and awareness. *Unconditional love is the freedom platform*, as I have said, to embrace diverse nations and liberate us all to a higher order. It is not intended for a select few who have to function in secrecy and deception to attain their ends. I urge you to inform yourselves about these organizations: I guarantee

your mind will be blown and not in a good way. Still, knowledge is power and it is the best way to strengthen yourselves. Collectively, these societies cannot withstand the light being shone upon them. Enough said about that.

These are some of the other things about which I'm majorly pissed off. Borders are huge one with me. I just never understood borders and I still don't. Riding Jonathan all over the globe, we have no need or recognition for artificial lines that keep people apart, separate and territorial.

In the movie, '20,000 Leagues Under the Sea,' Captain Nemo took refuge under the ocean surface for precisely that reason. He could roam free of the limitations imposed by man. He's one of my heroes. In the physical world, whales, dolphins, butterflies, birds and insects migrate north and south every year without visas. As far as I can tell, after religion and politics, borders have caused the most wars. Let's not go there again. Seems to me your belly button is your badge to the human race, not a specific place. Let's all be free range roamers of the world.

People go nuts when I talk like this. It would be chaos, anarchy, total disorder, they say. I agree that while it would take some sorting out since we're all so attached to

our own territories, I believe ultimately it would be worth it. If everyone were free to go anywhere, anytime, people would gravitate towards their own place. Their ideal place would be where they'd want to apply themselves to enhance it. Invested commitment would bring out the best of the best in them. What is wrong with this picture? Sounds good to me. Surely, that would be better for everyone.

Now, let's look at democracy. We've tried it. Our ideas about it don't work, despite our Founding Fathers' best endeavors. There have been too many self-serving divergent, secretive and destructive forces working against it. Politicians work to keep themselves in office, not for the good of the people.

Here's my suggestion. As I said earlier, since this is my vision, I'd be benevolent dictator of the world temporarily (until people attain *their Swan-selves*) and I'd rule democratically. By then, places would embrace their own highest goals. Conflict would be eradicated as we operate from a global, beneficent perspective and not from a limited, territorial one.

Don't get me wrong. Since I am trying to empower and strengthen people to think for their own selves, I

obviously wouldn't be ruling as a tyrant or attempting oppression or anything like that. *A megalomaniac, I am not*. It would be a temporary, interim, transitional thing until we all elevate our thinking to a higher place and iron out some of the bugs (pun intended). I would be a vessel for Spirit to manifest this divine vision.

Why do I feel qualified for this position? Because I know a few things about love and what I've learned is that you can't be an effective leader unless *unconditional love is your primary platform*. Go figure. We are back to that, again. I refuse to keep apologizing for the truth. Remember the famous photo taken from the last Apollo flight (#17) to the moon where we saw Earth from space for the first time -- our world is one blue, beautiful orb and we *all* share it together. We have to think globally and act locally, as the famous saying directs.

Here's a 'small' fun fact: Did you know that science has proved that the Earth is 1/one billionth the size of a pinhead in terms of the Universe? A humbling fact for our grandiose egos who think we are so smart. In addition, just like radio or television frequencies, humans access 0.05% of the possible frequency bands that are available. We quite literally are blind to whatever is going on, on these

alternate planes of existence. That is why, I believe, anything is possible.

Back to our topic: Justice without unconditional love is about as bad as science or technology without it. Humans have freedom to use animals for experiments and torture them relentlessly in the name of progress. It's a polite way to deny man's inhumanity to nature giving way to man's inhumanity to man. We have done heaps of that in our human history.

The first thing I'd implement would be training programs to teach everyone these communication, intrapsychic skills. I'd start with the world leaders and the kindergarten classes to address the problems from both ends of the spectrum. Since we have been programmed from cradle to grave to conform with the existing order, as insane as it may be, we need to give our children the very best teaching about unconditional love that we can. This cannot be done in a religious context as that creates its own issues. Sad but true. It must be non-denominational but respectful of cultural humanitarian values.

Fortunately, these skills are malleable, learnable and teachable. Increasing numbers of people today are already pretty advanced in them. When more and more people

front from *their Christ-selves* and create win/win resolutions to problems, there won't be the difficulty people imagine and things will get increasingly easier. Oh, by the way, I wouldn't actually be ruling but serving. I'd willingly and gladly offer myself in stewardship, if it would help the world.

Here's how I'd tackle the most difficult problem I think we have on the planet today in the Middle East. If I can handle this one first, maybe then you'd have more faith in me. Since peace is what everyone says they want, I'd take that at face value. No compromise here. The sad fact, though, is what people really want is to be right and dominate with their world view. That's where we've become dangerously stuck. But let's give people the benefit of the doubt that peace is what we really want.

I'd create an international committee called the OM (One Mind) or UM (Unified Mind) organization, whichever you prefer, to coexist with the UN. It would consist of representatives of every country, religion and spiritual group in the world. Conflict would be banned because *no one would speak*. Their sole purpose would be to join in *one* mind to feel, think and *be at peace* in a silent prayer for a miracle, on a daily basis, from whatever their particular

persuasion required or allowed. The prayer could be as simple as: *'PEACE*' or 'Be still and know I am God.' This would continue until *real lasting peace* was attained. Obviously, it could take a while, but we must not underestimate the power of prayer. We are aligning with our Source.

It seems to me people really get in trouble when they open their mouths and talk. With this vocal rest format and a unified mind focusing on *true genuine peace*, our loving Creator cannot help but respond because that's what Divine Love is about anyway. Since we're made in this image, we are joining with Divine Will for us and returning home to our true selves. This does not negate individual differences, however. It connects where we are alike and allows diversity to exist elsewhere.

It cannot fail with unified thinking because our Creator is ultimately one mind and we would partner our own selves with that mind that is the power that has all power. Personally, I believe this is God's Will for Heaven on Earth. Knowledge of this is power and consistent practice can move mountains. It's a no-brainer, I think. We've just gotten away from the truth of who we really are. That's both the problem and the solution.

A type of this format existed in the Caribbean, on the island of Dominica. Dame Mary Eugenia Charles, (1919 to 2005), coming from a privileged background, was well-educated at the University of Toronto and the London School of Economics. She was the first and only female prime minister in Dominica from 1980 to 1995. Despite having many other prospects worldwide, she returned to her homeland because she felt the leaders did not care about the people.

Her Freedom Party platform was a form of social democracy based on service and integrity in governance with fairness, honesty, trust and compassion as guidelines. Being a solicitor, she held open court every Tuesday and Thursday to decide disputes over everything. Her word was final. It was the law then. This may sound dangerous, but the fact is she loved her people and they loved her because she was always fair. Their name for her was mamo -- meaning a strict motherly figure.

Quietly, she did many charitable works such as promoting free education, free speech and free assembly. With the national interest and common good at heart, she had no interest in the accumulation of the trappings of

power. *Her focus was only to serve.* That is my main point. On that basis, it works.

Her famous quote was: 'Men have the grand vision and they pass it on to someone else to put into practice. Women follow the details more. They want to know that it is being put into practice.' This is a critical observation with female advantage, again.

Fairness, based on unconditional love, seems to be at the crux of the game. If you don't issue favors to one side or another and everyone feels like they hurt just a little but they're also happy just a little, then your decision was probably a fair one. It also creates *trust* -- one of the three essential elements in effective relationships.

I know that anytime I have personally arbitrated over a dispute, both sides have had a certain amount of truth to them or, as Bob Dylan would put it, 'You're right on your side and I'm right on mine.' It's a tedious matter to weigh out the truth on both sides and come up with an equitable solution. That's a problem in life. My point is that we can get better at doing this.

We can create a new history of redemption by focusing on forgiveness and reconciliation. With humble

modesty that we do not know everything, we can approach issues with moderation and a balanced perspective. Individuals, not politicians, must be the most important part of life and creativity needs to be encouraged and rewarded. Our artists, teachers and original thinkers should be paid at least as much as our entertainers and sports players. With this approach, compromise fades into being a non-issue.

I'm now going to tell you more about where I am coming from in writing this book. There is a bigger picture and then, I have to take you on a trip through some of my biggest challenges in life. This volume is intended to be a journey which we all take together.

It's time to get to the heart of the matter. I'll tell you this much up front. It's not easy stuff to talk about but it is stuff you need to know. It's about *spirit* and the difficulty in living from this place in the modern world. Too many people equate this with religion and the waters become impassible. We must avoid this trap at all costs to enable unity to thrive and grow.

I'm only human and the limitations of language are a big problem, but I'll do my best. In my world, you don't have to hide the challenges you've faced that bring you

home to the truth. They become the grain of sand in the oyster that becomes a pearl. So, be compassionate, please.

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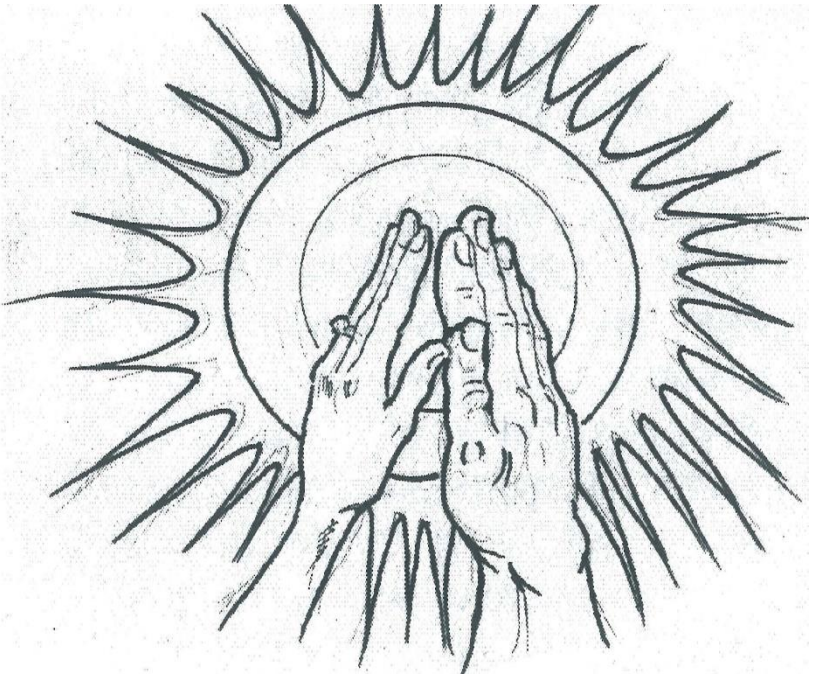
CHAPTER 7

Beloved Readers



Yelapa

May 8, 2002

Dear Beloved Readers.

This is an open-hearted letter to summarize where we are so far and take it one big step farther. I am using this format to make the message more intimate as well as inclusive. We are joined in spirit, with or without a physical form. There is immense power and hope in that statement alone. Our thoughts are measurable things and we must take responsibility for them. Do your thoughts uplift you and others, or do you cast a shadow by putting out negativity all the time?

The title of this book is intended to underscore the nature of what can determine the impulse of change in our lives. When a crisis happens to you, it is personal. Whatever that it is, (a divorce, a death, a disabled child, an illness, loss of a job, a murder of a loved one or whatever), you are affected in a life-altering, deeply visceral way. You are never the same again. This is true of positive experiences also (a birth, a marriage, a transcendent moment etc.) Only you

know what that experience means to you and only you can define its meaning and how you proceed from there.

Can you identify the precise moment that life turned you upside down or inside out and became intimately personal for you? When a company downsizes and tells their employees, 'It's not personal,' how do people respond? It certainly is personal to them and they are outraged by the implication that it is not.

In the end, it almost doesn't matter (except to the individual) whether an experience is positive or negative. The universe has an opening for spirit to move in and alter their inner depths forever. Perception is the key to all of it.

A death, for example, can be a blessed release to end a loved one's suffering. A pregnancy can feel like a tragedy to a teenager's parents. It is solely up to the individual to define it. This is a critical time because the well-established ego can double-down, resisting all new input, leaving a wake of anger, resentment and bitterness for a lifetime. Sadly, the golden moment is lost.

The current state of world events has forced a world of hurt to our conscious attention. Since September 11th, 2001, in particular, we are dealing with a cataclysm of

trauma that continues to impact people daily and threatens to be an ongoing focus whether we want it or not.

More than ever, people are searching for effective tools to deal with their pain. Even the word pain seems inadequate to address the experience many people are having. We are probably more accurately all in a state of Posttraumatic Stress Response, since that day. Many more people are genuinely suffering and in huge distress now.

This book is written to offer people specific tools to deal with this overwhelming situation. We need to understand first and foremost that pain can be thought of as a continuum. If you used a rating scale of one to ten, where would you rate the current suffering of your life? Perhaps the pain of waiting in line at the grocery store is a two or three for you, but for someone else a six or seven, if they have a bad backache or the flu that day. It's all relative and it's all personal to the individual. What truly matters is the rating you give it yourself.

September 11th, 2001 took many people way off this scale to a rating of fifteen to twenty or more. Watching the second plane hit the World Trade Towers live on CNN, from the safety of a hotel room in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, still

impacted me and my partner at about that extent. America is my country, don't forget.

We were horrified, appalled, shocked and so deeply concerned for all the people going through that at the ground zero of their lives whether in New York, Washington or, God forbid, the people trapped on those planes. It still hurts to even think about them and their families. We were riveted to CNN for days unable to tear ourselves away, despite the horror and the helplessness we felt. Even then, we realized that the repetition of the scenes was a therapeutic way to begin our own adjustment to our belief that the world was permanently altered that day. We just couldn't stop watching in order to process it.

Many of the intrapsychic tools offered in this book are meant to address the severe end of the continuum of suffering. No word truly seems to embrace this concept. This introduction is designed to define what the pain is that we're attempted to help heal. The severe end of the scale would include issues like divorce, adultery, grief and loss, lingering illnesses or addictions and the caregivers of both, as well as physical, sexual and other types of abuse. But now in a sense, it includes us all because the repercussions of terrorism and ongoing attacks are in our face on a continuous basis. It is

tempting and human to try to block it all and want life to return to the way it was before September 11th.

A person can be in a state of Posttraumatic Stress Response and not even know it. When we find a way to cope, we tend to stick to it, whether it's really healing or not. Some people find solace in work, for example and then become overachievers. Others find exercise an outlet and can even reach a point of obsession about it.

On an Oprah show, a woman was describing the explosion of her heart while doing a yoga class. After immediate triple bypass surgery, she was forced to face the fact that her driving ambition in work had pushed her over the edge. She never smoked nor drank nor did all the things people do to be vulnerable to a heart attack. She just drove herself too hard. Her heart attack forced her to reexamine her entire lifestyle and she had to change.

Sometimes it is our loved ones who recognize our problems before we do ourselves. Frequently it's an employer, a school counselor, a family friend or even a stranger. Our coping skills can be that effective at deceiving us and the people around us. Unfortunately, that becomes a big part of the problem, as I'll explain in a moment.

Between us, my partner, ceci, and I have over fifty years of life experience working with various severe psychological problems. We both have advanced Masters level degrees in Psychology. But as I've said before, I have degrees in the science fields of Zoology, Biology and Entomology. I'm a "bug" guy. Together and individually, we both have extensively researched the fields of spirituality and the human growth potential movement looking for answers for ourselves and our clients. We feel we have a lot to offer from various perspectives to facilitate healing these issues and we want to help.

Posttraumatic Stress Response is a term that was coined when the Vietnam veterans, upon returning from that horrific experience, were unable to readjust to life at home. It has now been expanded to include all manner of life events since humans tend to respond in relatively similar ways to trauma.

Now, we find that many people have been living in a state of Posttraumatic Stress due to their childhood suffering. This had become normal home life for them. It appears that the knee-jerk reaction to trauma is a state of shock or denial to block out the event and leads to finding a level of living which is in essence just coping or existing.

People often are unable, unwilling or not accessible to the support systems to allow them to fully process the experience and respond emotionally. The biggest part of the problem here is that we cannot heal what we cannot feel. Bit by bit, we must process ALL the emotions surrounding the experience to absorb it, put it into a greater perspective, find a meaning for it and then move forward into the unknown. The unknown contains our capacity for joyous, creative actualization of our untapped potential, which is our spiritual truth.

Without it, we cannot thrive. We have to be open emotionally and we have to be courageous enough to face the truth of what has happened to us. Our personal truth is one of our greatest assets in recovery. How do you *really feel? Does it seem like a betrayal to disclose family secrets? That is usually the first sign there is pain to be healed.*

Denial, then, becomes the enemy. But, how many people are afraid to look at their truth and feel ALL their feelings? Feelings can be messy, excruciatingly painful and difficult to sort out. Humans hate to feel that loss of control. It's normal to want to avoid pain, but unfortunately, it's essential for growth. We either stay stuck and die inside or

we move forward into greater life. Those are the only two options.

So, perhaps this book should come with a warning label. From our various disciplines of science, psychology, personal living experience and spirituality, ceci and I have written this book in a way that can probably evoke some disturbing emotions. Unfortunately, it is bound to offend some people and we've written some of our own experiences to show that we too have had our personal challenges, with which we've struggled greatly. We were raised, after all, in this crazy, upside down world where being unique is considered a threat.

Having the courage to be really honest with our readers, though, we are attempting to operate as role models to get past the shame and humiliation in order to focus on solutions. We've tried to be educational, entertaining and positive because it turns out that, with openness to face our own personal unresolved issues, there is a wealth of healing forces both within us and all around us. Our quality of life expands and alters for the better by embracing them.

The power of the mind and imagination, as we have shown, is an awesome healing force, if used correctly. Also, we have the power of nature, humor, love and the ability to

relate to others. There are no guarantees that the outcome will necessarily be what we hope for. No doubt, for example, terrorism will be an ongoing problem.

More important is how we live at peace with ourselves and then extend that peace out to others, whenever possible, despite whatever the circumstances are. Utilizing the forces of karma and forgiveness enable us to be more effective at this. Peace is itself a higher vibrational frequency which accesses the laws of attraction. Like attracts like and prosperity (which does not mean just monetary wealth) increases.

We have found the belief that opposites attract is only true on the level of self-esteem. People with low self-esteem draw others with low self-worth to them. Can you name anyone who truly held themselves in high regard hanging out with a person who self-harmed or was violent, unless it was their job to do so? Even then, they probably would not last long in that employment without a high degree of objective compassion. They would guard their self-esteem to not be drawn into negativity. It's tough work. Most of us are not Mother Teresa.

It is absolutely essential to overcome fear or at least be prepared to face our fear. Fear is a low vibrational

frequency which attracts more fear-based people and things to you. It is dangerous to live in that place.

Be brave. Be courageous. Open yourself up emotionally and the rewards can be truly amazing. Educate yourself about the innumerable books and tapes on how to uplift your life. Surround yourself with positive people.

The extent of your denial of your own Posttraumatic Stress Response is in essence a measure of the degree of fear you have to face for genuine healing. While we hold no judgment about those refusing to do this, we have to be honest. In our experience, this same refusal will limit the quality of your life and your capacity to actualize your potential. It does not allow you to comprehend your own being as an inherent part of something much greater than you alone. So, you stay alone, lonely and live a smaller life than you deserve. We know at the outset, there will be many who deny that their quality of life is less than it could be. Better the devil you know than launching into the unknown. So be it.

Give yourself the gift of true healing. This is personal now. This is about you living in a new way with you and then extending that to others. Be willing to face the truth of your

own personal feelings, thoughts and behavior and accept personal responsibility for the entirety of your life.

It's not always pretty so we've written some tough chapters to show that have learned from our own dark side. How can we expect you to be honest, if we're not prepared to be?

Doing fulltime individual and family therapy is no longer enough for ceci and me. We call ourselves intuitive empaths. We feel the distress of the world so much more deeply now than ever before. We feel the pressing need to reach a greater audience. We feel a call from individuals, couples, children, animals and more globally, for the planet. This is our gift and our response to that distress.

All of us come into the world alone and we go out alone but we do not have to be alone throughout the journey in between. Ceci and I are people you have never met, but we truly feel your pain and have compassion and empathy for your suffering. This is our way of helping. We pray that you can accept something in this act of love that can facilitate your personal recovery.

There is one last thing while I think of it. We've heard lots of professional therapists talk about love being an

action, not a feeling. Excuse me, but lots of people in abusive relationships stay because they still feel love for their partner. Feeling is inherent in love. Ceci and I agree that love is both an action and a feeling. Why is it so difficult to embrace the concept of two things occurring at once?

Of course, love ideally should not hurt. Love should empower and strengthen people. It should feel good*. But sometimes life itself hurts and you have to hang in through some tough times like so many people are doing right now. It seems to be a matter of balance. Do the feelings of love and the actions of love balance out in the long run?*

Sometimes the most loving action is to leave someone who is abusive to you, but often people leave too soon. Can these things be addressed and worked through? Are both people willing to look at their own part and take responsibility for their own actions and feelings?

Of course, love is a feeling. But feeling love for someone who is consistently behaving in a totally unacceptable manner towards you may require the loving action of leaving that person. First be sure you've done all you can to correct your part in the relationship. As therapists, rarely did ceci and I meet people separating who didn't still love each other. But, for various reasons, like

adultery, addictions, neglect, or mental, emotional and physical abuse, they could no longer live together.

Again, it's a personal choice made solely by each and every individual for themselves. Lots of folks facing these issues have found a way through them to a new level of intimacy. Some people can forgive an affair or continue to caretake a loved one suffering from an active addiction.

This book continues to get very personal and help you address your own unique situation. There is nothing more personal than your own beliefs in a power greater than yourself. Your spiritual outlook is your saving grace, so to speak. Atheists too have to acknowledge the power of Mother Nature and our small role in a huge galaxy, even if they deny a Creator who originated it. Like gravity or karma, God does not need you to believe in Him. He will keep your heart beating, your lungs breathing and gravity holding everything together without you. He wants you to exercise your free will to believe, however, so He can make your life more abundant and prosperous, in all His infinite ways.

Spirituality, then, is the essence of finding your own truth which is the guiding principle of your life and keeps you on a balanced level. It is inherently ethical, loving, honest and expansive. That means all those religions which preach

exclusivity (we are okay; 'they' are not beliefs) are off track. Our Creator, whatever you hold that to be, is one mind and when we are open to this, we experience that oneness of being with all living things. This results in changed hearts, attitudes and behaviors towards everything and everyone.

This is our personal act of love for the world, but we also feel love for the world at a very deep level. In fact, the feeling is the driving motivation for the action.

Blessed be, dear readers.

SKIPPY

XOXOXO

~

UPDATE from ceci: I continue to present Skippy's general perspective of his ideal world in the following chapters. He was very passionate about these ideas, expressing them strongly at times.

Being overbearing would never be our intention. He wanted people to sit down peacefully together, define who we are and how we want our world to be -- then behave

accordingly. From that approach, we create a new healthier planet.

He would encourage discussion of these ideas because communication was critical to Skippy. It is how humans do this that matters most. We cannot afford to build walls between us by not listening or being prejudiced. With receptive hearts and minds, we can bridge differences and permit new solutions to emerge. Spiritual growth was Skippy's primary goal.

I beg Skippy's readers to keep an ongoing, open mind. These ideas represent the overview of his vision and cannot possibly hope to cover every aspect of it. He trusted that our Creator would reveal the specifics when we align with His Will. He believed it is the Creator, not the devil, who is in the details.

~

CHAPTER 8

Relentlessly Skippy

OK, OK, this is the moment of *truth*. The heart of the matter, as I said, earlier.

First, a few statements about my reluctance with this topic -- bear with me, please. It helps you get to know where I'm coming from. Since I told you, honesty is one of the cornerstones of healthy relationships, I'll be honest here. I have literally agonized over this chapter. I've woken up many a night with this on my mind, fearful of the disclosure and the reaction to it. Yes, I still have fear to work on. This is very controversial stuff and I don't want to offend anyone. I don't want, either, to be set up as a guru, for the seekers in the crowd or to be crucified by the extremist fundamentalist believers.

With that opening, I'll venture out to say: this chapter is about *spirituality*. Right away, I feel myself bump up against many peoples' belief systems. Why do I let ceci talk me into this stuff? But, I know why -- the pillar of spirituality is *surrender* and in this case, I must surrender to a power greater than me -- the power of *female* -- as we've already talked about. *She knows something* -- something, I've always wanted to know and I'm darned if I'll get this close without finding out *her* secret. Plus, we

have already decided that, since she is totally fearless, if this ever gets really big, *she'll* be the one to go public with it. So, what have I got to lose?

In fact, the more I think about it, I have everything to gain. Please don't think of me as a wimp. It's just that being front-row and center, in the limelight, is *not my thing*. But, since ceci is willing to be out there with the message, I'm ready to share more of what I *know* with you, dear readers.

So here it is: *I have a gift.* Now, understand at the outset, often times in life, it has felt more like a curse than a gift, but nevertheless, now I know it to be a true blessing. I know things. I know things before they happen. It's made life a little tough and not always fun.

Sometimes in trying to come to embrace this gift, I've behaved in a human way. This is the only time I'm likely to apologize for my bad behavior, so the people who know me better enjoy it, while they can. I'm not usually apologetic because I also *know* that certain things have to unfold just the way they do. Skippy doesn't do guilt. Sorry, (well sort of, but not really).

This gift is one of spiritual *knowingness*. I do realize that everyone has access to this knowingness if they stay in

touch with *their real Swan-self*, so it's really not so special, after all. The difference is that it seems I never lost touch with it. I have always been and will always be *relentlessly Skippy.*

Now, how to explain this to others? Words seem hopelessly inadequate, but they are all we have, in this medium, so I'll try. I figure the best way is with a metaphor. Here goes -- *spirit is like water*. Just think about *water* for a moment.

- Water can be hidden in a forest and traced to its source, where it appears to be insignificant and small.
- Water can gain momentum down a slope and provide life-sustenance to animals, birds, plants and man.
- Water is needed in villages, towns and cities to wash away impurities and to cleanse and nourish us.
- Water can torture a man with one constant, relentless drop.
- Water can transform the landscape, as in the Grand Canyon.

- Water can be contaminated by toxic pollutants and do harm to many.
- Water can be purified and kept pristine and give life to all.
- We can't live without water, any more than we could live without air. In fact, I could have used air for the metaphor.
- Water is subjected to powerful forces (like wind) and scares the heck out of the hardiest sailors.
- Water can have a calming effect like a gently flowing brook.
- Water has to have a container. Think about it. Without a container, it spills out everywhere: a cup, a glass, a barrel, a riverbed – whatever -- water needs a container.

Now, what has all this to do with spirit, you say? Well, substitute the word *spirit* for *water* and I think you get my point. We really can't live without it; it is the life-sustaining force of the universe, whether you believe it or not. Spirit doesn't need *you* to believe in it for it to keep relentlessly doing what it does. Sorry, human egoists. No faith or organized religion is necessary. The world can be our 'church.' It just does what it does no matter what,

when, who or where. Sounds like love without conditions to me, an all-encompassing love.

Now, the gift I have is that I have always known this force and can't ever forget *it*, even when it has made my life impossible because I could not find anyone who could share it with me -- until I met ceci. Patience was required while reawakening her knowingness and that was our tough period, but she didn't forget as much as she thought she did and she *remembers now*. She's come back with a vengeance. Trust a woman to do that, so watch out. Plus, she has this awesome, huge family network to back her up.

But, for all us shy, retiring types, who just hold true to a private conviction, let me say this: *I am a container for spirit*. I can't help it. I can't control it; I don't even want to. I am a vehicle for spirit to do its thing through me on the planet. It runs through me; it runs over me; it runs me. And *I love it.* I don't even have a choice and I don't want one. It is the best thing that ever happened to me. Spirit doesn't quit when times get tough. It makes me the brat I seem to be sometimes. It doesn't quit when I give up. It doesn't quit, period. *Thanks, God*. It is bigger than me and is something I totally trust. Spirit is like Jonathan to me: on another plane,

another dimension, but accessible to me anytime I call. If I think of it like water, it sustains my very being.

As always, there's a catch. *Spirit calls me constantly*. It doesn't want me to ever forget it. There is something only I can do for it, which is true for all of us if we surrender our free will. This does not come from my ego but from my connection to a higher power.

This is a power great enough to keep six billion individual lives going all at once, as well as unknowable plant and animal species and uncountable numbers of stars and galaxies. It governs the smallest cell to the largest organisms and beyond our world to outer space.

I figure this power is equally great enough to have a plan for *each* and *every one* of us, in order to actualize our highest potential -- if we don't get in the way. And that's the problem. Humans were given this free will option. Not even God would interfere with that, I know. But, if we surrender, we will find out what that highest vision is for us. Can you afford to get in the way of that plan?

What are ceci's secrets that she shares with the female species? *Women already know this stuff.* They call it feminine intuition. The problem is that, in our 4000-year

patriarchal society, we have disempowered them so much, as to make them forget their true knowledge and really trust it. Or else, we make them so insecure that they are diminished in power to men and less threatening. Now this is not a blame game, but I happen to think that we can be bigger than that. Or at least, I hope so.

As I said before, I understand women. I really like women as friends and I love, *really love* this woman, ceci. I think I have some credibility here with the macho guys in the crowd. Maybe we need to listen to what women have to say about how to run the world. They have rarely had a say.

It would be a different world if women truly in touch with their innate, feminine powers could run things. There would be consistent, compassionate, empathetic, egalitarian fairness for all. How can that be a bad thing? Also, spirit is accessed through the female, intuitive part of our brains, not the male, intellect part. The combination gives us infinite power. We are denying ourselves this experience. That's probably why we are so far off track.

I realize that currently many women have been socialized to operate from their left-brained male side. It has been necessary to compete in a male dominated world. It would still be easier for them to access their right-

brained female nature again, than it would be for men. Many males are so removed from their intuitive nature as to require formal education to access it. Unconditional love is a tougher concept to grasp for some men than for most women.

This is a God thing, not a bad thing. He created Adam *and* Eve, who were considered equal but different in their true natures, until the fall. Women, sadly, have been paying for that misjudgment ever since.

In this world, all creatures and plants are relentlessly themselves and reproduce after their own kind, excluding human genetic interference, of course. I consider it a wondrous privilege to observe animals in their natural habitat, just hanging out and going about their day. No apologies, no regrets and no guilt about hunting and capturing their lunch. We would be lucky to function so effortlessly in our daily lives.

This is, deliberately, a brief chapter to emphasize the main point and leave you to reflect on your individual truth in your own minds. Spiritual individuality will continue to be a central theme from here. How balanced are your male and female energies?

For now, I'd like to finish on a light but illustrative note with a joke that I like. An ant wanted to cross a body of water when a scorpion came along, offering to take him across on a piece of wood. "You will eat me, though," said the Ant. "No, I won't," promised the Scorpion. They came to the other side and the scorpion stung the ant, paralyzing him. "You said you wouldn't eat me," cried the Ant. The Scorpion replied, "You knew I was a scorpion when you got on my back." See, he just could not deny his own nature, no matter what he promised.

How have we become so adept at denying ours? I maintain that it is our programmed, lifelong brainwashing from a socially controlled, male dominated, historical context that has created this conundrum. This is the challenge from which we need to liberate ourselves. Our spirit must be free to self-actualize our potential.

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CHAPTER 9

The Upside of Alcoholism (and the Downside of Perfectionism)

The way I see it, addictions are the only way that we, Skippy types, can hang around long enough to be in this world, until it either kills us or it figures out how to deal with us. Without addictions, we, deep-feeling, intuitive ones, wouldn't be able to stay around at all. This chapter is designed to illustrate this phenomenon.

The 1997 movie 'Powder' was an excellent demonstration of my point. A highly intelligent, psychic, albino boy is a social outcast who is tortured and ridiculed to the point of suicide. Except, he alone knows, he merely returns to his essence as spirit by attracting lightning to himself. It is not death but resurrection because he could not stay in such a hostile, unforgiving, fearful world. I feel like that a lot, but I stay because I have *faith.*

Where is it ever written that we have to feel bad about feeling good?

From a very early age, I realized I was different, in fact, 'terminally unique.' By the age of 5, I could tell anyone who would listen, the names, lengths and weights of all the dinosaurs and how long ago they lived. I started my insect collection at the age of 3 and never quit because insects to me were like miniature dinosaurs.

I grew up in a fantasy world that was laced with all my favorite characters: Captain Marvel, Superman and Scrooge McDuck. In fact, comic books were the impetus for me learning to read. Early, in grade school, I found it far more pleasant to be off in my head with Captain Marvel or Superman, battling villains and monsters. I would hang out with Scrooge McDuck, outwitting the Beagle Boys. When called on by the teacher to answer a question, I would have to admit that I wasn't paying the least bit of attention. Math, what a bore. At parent-teacher conferences, the principal would tell my mother that "Skippy's a bright young boy, but he's not here. He doesn't apply himself." By this time, though, I'd already learned that to be me made me feel good and so, I just couldn't be anything else. I don't seem to have lost that, unlike many folks.

After school, many of my classmates would go to the local corner store and buy sheets of bubble gum because they had cards in them. There were baseball, football, basketball cards and also, a world wildlife series -- the 'Frank Buck Bring-Them-Back-Alive' nature series. We would all gather outside to see what we got. The guys were always disappointed when it was one of the nature cards, but I was always right there: ready to trade my Mickey

Mantle or Joe DiMaggio (now worth about $35,000 apiece) for a five to one trade for their nature cards. One Joe DiMaggio equaled one cobra, one leopard, one rhino, one elephant and one giraffe (now worth nothing, but still worth the world to me). Even then, they thought I was weird. I've gotten used to that, over the years.

All of this was setting me up to see clearly the things in the world that made me crazy. One day, after school, I invited two boys home to play in my back yard. When we got there, my African-American other mother was putting laundry on the clothesline. They said, "We can't go back there, there's a nigger." Now, I didn't know what a nigger was, having never heard the word, but it didn't sound nice. I promptly beat the crap out of both of them. It made me crazy that this beautiful soul to me was being mocked, even in tone. Now that I know what the word means, I know I did the right thing even without realizing it then. I, intuitively, knew it was a bad name they were calling my other mother.

As I said before, I seem to just know some things by instinct. But, when it seems others don't know it, it used to make me nuts. Especially obvious things, like racism. Now, I

can understand that lack of awareness more easily, but it still really bugs me.

I soon found other ways to stimulate my intellect. Do you remember cap guns? I found out you could take a couple of caps from the roll, place them in a small piece of tin foil, put a Beebe in the center, twist up the foil and throw it down the hall at school. It went off with a resounding bang. Then, there were smoke bombs, sky rockets and other kinds of mischief. I know I was bad but in a good, innocent kind of way. I'd never be responsible for the Pentagon and the World Trade Towers or Unabomber tragedies because I'd never hurt anyone. That's the way I've lived my life. Make a statement from my internal truth, but don't hurt anyone.

Stimulation is the key. I needed to be excited and challenged in order to learn and to grow. I couldn't find it except in *my* way. So, I learned to rely on my way, trusting my own inner voice and direction. I still need that and I still trust my truth, even if others can't understand it or agree with it.

I became so disenfranchised with this world as to find it unbearable. Problems like global warming, species extinction, racism, hatred, pollution, violence etc. haunted

me constantly and still do. The more I learned, the more intolerable the world was. What am I doing here? This was the question constantly on my mind.

Then I found alcohol and soft drugs (I only ever smoked flowers, folks). It didn't change anything outside me but it helped *me* to stay above all that stuff and I could be comfortably numb, so it was bearable -- but only just.

Now, while I never became a skid row Skippy, I can certainly understand them because they have pretty much checked out. I can relate. I never lost a job or missed a day of work because of a hangover. I managed to obtain my PhD and become a responsible citizen of the community. I was active politically and always paid my taxes. I think it applies to a lot of people in mainstream life who are Skippys, in hiding. Even and perhaps especially, hiding from themselves.

Ceci puts herself in that category also. Many people, it turns out, are mainstream, functional alcoholic/addicts. Only now, she is accepting of it. She understands the pressures on us better now. She has dropped the shame around it.

I believe we have to feel good about who we truly are, no matter what it takes to get there. How truly exquisite when we can share that with someone.

But how terribly lonely it is not to be able to share these feelings until you meet someone who can. Who wouldn't want to leave the planet under these conditions? Alcohol took away that pain and loneliness -- for a while. It still hurts a lot and I still tend to go there. I have great faith, as I said earlier, in my own inner strength and trust that one day, ceci and I both will not need to numb ourselves from the pain of the world.

I just can't understand it. When are we going to get it? Man's inhumanity to man and nature totally baffles me. We're all here together on a very small planet spinning through space at 1000 mph with nowhere else to go. Why not get along? Seems like a no-brainer to me.

I don't know if I can make it clear that while I am escaping from something intolerable, more importantly I am escaping *to* something spiritually uplifting and mentally satisfying. There is a real world in my head where nothing ever goes wrong but I'll get into that more later, after ceci talks about her perspective on life with me in the next

chapter. These are tough to write, but hey, we said we'd be honest with you. Please hang in there.

Maybe I just never understood this very well before and, so, it's been really difficult for the people in my life. I'm a firm believer that everything happens for a reason. Everyone in my life up has helped prepare me for now when I rise to the challenge of openly accepting myself as I am.

Since I've been able to share Jonathan and Skippy with ceci and see how much she understands, I'm not so lonely and hidden, for the first time ever. I've almost stopped thinking that the men with white coats will take me away.

More often now, I am successful at moderating my alcohol intake. I don't want to hurt myself too much. I know I was using it abusively to finally get myself out of here but now, I'm not so interested in leaving. Writing this book is enormously satisfying to me because together ceci and I are making sense of things that used to confound us both totally. We feel like we're building something new, powerful and healing, for us and others. This is for the millions of Skippys in the world and their loved ones.

I am not insensitive to ceci's pain or the pain of others that came before her. I just couldn't allow myself to get distracted by that. I've been fighting for my life in my way. If anything, I've been too wrapped up in the opinions of others about all this.

To that end, I've gone to three treatment centers, private counselling, been the self-help group route etc. I've read spiritual and psychology books galore of all the major thinkers. A spiritual text that resonates with me to live by is one that I've studied for years and ceci and I read it out loud to each other every day. (I don't want to bias or divert any one consequently I will not give the name of it. People will find their own path which works for them.) It's not easy stuff to wade through, but to us, it rings *true*, so we stick with it.

I am not a dogma person or a lover of organized religion. I look for truth that connects for me within to knowingness I've always had since young Skippy days. I believe that the world, especially nature, is my 'church.' That's what I trust. That's when it clicks inside and feels right. I encourage you to do likewise, in your journey.

In a nutshell, I guess I'd come to the conclusion that I was unreachable on the earth plane. But God, as I

understand our Creator, has shown me that through ceci, this is not true. Now, I feel better than I have in a long, long time. Now, I cry for happy thoughts. With tears of relief.

Before I give you to ceci, I just want to say to all the people who tried to reach me, "Thank God for you in my life. You helped me hang in until the miracle happened."

Since ceci has explored this next psychological aspect more than me, I now defer to her expertise about the other end of the spectrum: perfectionism.

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Ceci here -- As much as alcoholism ravages the lives of the addict and the people around them, there is a subtle and more insidious behavior pattern that is equally, if not more so, devastating. It is perfectionism or, as I like to call it, the Martha Stewart syndrome.

The question to ask here is, "How happy are the people closest to the perfectionist?" Obviously, a clean house which is beautifully decorated, or a lovely garden, can be a delight to the spirit and the people living there. However, can the family members really relax in this environment? Can they connect emotionally with each

other on a meaningful level? Is this perfect home a joy to be in or a burden to maintain? Are people feeling lonely, neglected, tense and unimportant in deference to keeping up the standards of the perfectionist?

When Martha Stewart finished her jail time and began her home confinement, reporters asked her what she had missed the most. If memory serves me correctly, she held up lemons (or maybe it was oranges) and said, "These." As an afterthought, she added, "And my family, my daughter." It made me wonder how that affected her poor daughter.

What is wrong with this picture when appearances and things are valued more than people? These are unhappy people who are masking profound insecurity and emotional bankruptcy with a socially acceptable level of activity. The façade of happiness is a lie. They are only happy when everything is done their way. They are incredibly hard on the people closest to them and how others feel is mostly irrelevant.

There is quite the double standard here. Perfectionists are encouraged in their endeavors and rewarded while the substance addict is shamed, humiliated and punished.

Men (and, sadly, more women these days) predominantly demonstrate this with workaholism which is socially sanctioned with salary raises, perks and promotions. Their spouses and children are guilt-ridden for feeling lonely and abandoned because "(s)he is doing it for us." Truth be told: They are doing it for themselves and their egos. They crave the attention and status.

Women, typically, have the domain of the house to manifest their compulsive need to be busy and to avoid genuine intimacy. Anger and resentment towards the workaholic give the partner license to compulsively shop, decorate and keep running away from themselves and others. Their rewards come from feeling in control of everyone and everything. This is an impossible goal.

A tragic interface between excessive shopping and perfectionism is the increasing numbers of hoarders. Mostly living behind closed doors, some recent shows have brought the issue to light. These men and women cannot stop spending or bringing home things, from charity shops or even garbage bins and their homes become filled to the rafters. Being perfectionists, they are paralyzed by where to start to organize things. This allows them to give up and let everything take over. It's like reverse perfectionism.

In another example, anorexia and bulimia are the tragic outcomes of perfectionism when applied to food. The relentless compulsion to measure calories and limit quantity of intake reveals a devastating need to control. They are also highly resistant to treatment because the life-threatening illnesses are frequently secretive and subject to gross dishonesty, when corrective measures are taken. Our social preference for thinness likewise works against a healthy result.

Yet, in psychology, it appears that our human need to control knows no bounds, as it shows up in obsessive compulsive disorders as well. While I may have occasionally wondered if I locked the door on my way out, I have never had the daily drive to do it ritualistically three times, before I can walk away. I feel sad for these poor tortured souls.

But, what really is the difference between these destructive patterns? Social judgement is the extremes of the same continuum of control covering deep insecurity. One end is labelled bad and the other is good.

It makes me gag to see the prevalent double standard here. Perfectionists are, ultimately, human *doings*,

not human *beings* and the deep pain they cause is still pain. They, too, are addicts out of control.

But Martha Stewart did not go to jail for her perfectionism. Her home decorating drug of choice is not illegal, like what many substance addicts need. In fact, Martha made even more money while in jail, because of the 'victim' perspective perceived by the public of her indiscretion on the stock market. I wonder if she really learned anything.

I never met anyone who would say on their deathbed, "I wish I'd spent more time at the office or decorating that bedroom." At that poignant moment, they are more likely to say, "I wish I'd spent quality time with my family and told them I loved them more." The recorded tapes of trapped people in the Trade Towers on September 11, 2011, all stated their love and concern for their family members left behind. Seems we get really clear in a moment like that.

Avoiding intimacy of this nature is the underlying emotional issue and, in my view, is equally tragic and damaging to all those involved.

It bears repeating that we come into this world alone, vulnerably clothed with our consciousness and we go out alone, exactly the same way. In between, we can become entangled. The continuum is the range between fear of loss of control at one end and fear of intimacy at the other. But fear is relentlessly fear. It is painful. It obscures the fact that we are spiritual beings having a human experience, not human beings trying to get spiritual. The focus is totally backward.

In twelve step programs, *fear* stands for the acronym 'False Evidence Appearing Real.' The only alternative is genuine, authentic, *Really Real* love of an order that respects your own highest self and that of others. We were made in the image and likeness of our Creator which is unconditional love. What most humans call love is really manipulation designed to avoid intimacy with self and others. Ironic, isn't it? No wonder, so many people are sick and suffering emotionally and mentally. It makes me melancholy, but I have faith in our Creator to, ultimately, help us all to evolve by returning to true, real love that is our innate nature.

On a final note about extreme ends of this continuum, I have often pondered the family systems that

produce a serial killer, psychopath, sex offender or sociopath. While many cases do involve severe childhood abuse, there is evidence to believe that a perfectionistic upbringing could also create such monsters as Dennis Rader, the BTK (bind, torture, kill) criminal. This man's pattern included ritualistic, obsessive attention to minute details, repetitive acts and total dissociation from empathy towards his victims. This sounds a lot like the learned behavior patterns of an emotionally bankrupt family dynamics in a workaholic household.

Most of these people do have feelings but emotions are repressed and acted out through inappropriate excessive expressions. The extreme end of this spectrum is the psychopath who is void of any normal human feelings. Conversely, they get *high* out of their deviant actions.

How often have we been stunned by the tragic news of a shy, quiet person who suddenly snaps and murders someone? This is the result of repression and denial of emotions.

Children imitate adult behaviors or rebel against them. Either way, adults are the role models to trust and respect or cautionary tales to avoid. We need to explore these actions more and remove the stigmas that socially

sanction some deeds while condemning others. It is essential to increase our empathy and compassion for all.

It seems obvious to me that any extremes hold inherent dangers for us all. We need balance and honesty, inside and out, to be truly happy and thriving. We need it, also, for society to be safe.

Likewise, judgement of people needs to be gently eradicated and understanding of these dynamics is essential. By creating new environments of unified tolerance, individuals will be empowered to emerge from the extremes and find their centered equilibrium.

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CHAPTER 10

Never Abandon Skippy

Ceci here -- It is really *not* easy living with Skippy. I don't want anyone to harbor *any* illusions about this. His relentlessness and single-mindedness can be brutal and I've been challenged daily by the way he does things or, more often, leaves things undone. It's way beyond my comfort zone. Yes, he has a sweet side but that's not what this chapter is about. I tend to be an action person. Perhaps, I leap too often before I look carefully -- as evidenced by my swift departure to Mexico originally. I tend to trust my instincts. It's what I'm used to and comfortable with, for the most part. As always, I'll ride out the storm on my own steam. Skippy has been an anomaly, a force to be reckoned with and yes, even a major thorn in my side. He has pushed my buttons *bigtime*. Grrr. He pisses me off a lot.

I keep coming back to the original values of relationship we discussed in the first few weeks of contact which are *unconditional love*, *honesty, and trust.* These are all essential and important to me and always have been, however elusive and intangible they may seem at times.

I'd been a therapist for over twenty years by the time I met him, but I couldn't have summed up the three main cornerstones of thriving relationships as well as

Skippy did, on a casual date. "What would it take for you to marry again?" I had asked him. And that was his answer, just as nonchalantly as if I'd asked him if he wanted lasagna for dinner. *Unconditional love, honesty and trust.* He didn't even stop to think about it. That got my attention. It still blows my mind. To this day, I think deeply about these things and try hard to live up to them -- especially the *UNconditional love* thing. I realized I had much to learn from this man and still do.

After the cigarettes, pot, and giant spiders came the active alcoholism. That just about did me in. At the point I met Skippy, I hadn't had a drink in ten years and it was another two years before I finally did drink again. I'd had a problem with alcohol early in my life, so I avoided it like the plague. It was the same with cigarettes. I fancied myself Ms. Perfect Recovery, although I'd stopped attending meetings because I hadn't met many truly happy people there despite years and years of sobriety. 'What's wrong with this picture?' I kept asking myself.

Do you know the difference between being alone and lonely? I could handle being alone, but I was profoundly lonely and longed for a deep, spiritual connection with a man. It's not true that I went back to

drinking because I stopped going to meetings. I was attending meetings *every day*, in Puerto Vallarta, for one and a half years to offset my loneliness and meet compatible people. I met Skippy there.

No, I went back to drinking because I had to be where he was. He had something I wanted and needed, drunk or sober for better or worse. Many people disagreed with this. Vehemently. God knows I've been called an enabler, a drunk, a codependent, a doormat, a problem, *the problem* and worse. I've been told I might as well inject the alcohol into his veins. I believe Skippy feared for my life because of my constant presence with him. I was powerless to control his drinking. No one had been successful at that.

But I know: alcohol is *not* our biggest problem. Being misfits in a crazy, upside-down, twisted world is the problem. Oh, I can hear all the nay-sayers now. She's delusional, in denial. Hey, folks, as I write this, *I'm sober*. Deal with it. For those of you who like to count these events, I am only sober one day at a time. Otherwise I don't keep track.

I am writing this chapter for all the caregivers of people out there with addictions, life-threatening illnesses or unresolved grief and loss issues. It's time we have a

voice. It's time our agony is acknowledged and listened to. The alcoholic, malingering or grief-stricken persons are not the only ones with severe pain.

Caring for someone in this condition hurts like hell without all the flak from other people. That just makes it worse. Some issues are:

- We hate to feel helpless in caring for our loved one and then we get all these labels put on us.
- Who needs it? Who is there to support us?
- What are we supposed to do about it? Are we endless sources of supply of optimism, encouragement or positive thinking?
- Where do we get recharged? How do we keep going when we pour our love into someone and they get worse?

We are the ones who keep daily life functioning -- we pay the bills, handle lawyers, consult with doctors, deal with the insanity all around us, get challenged by the fears of others –- cope –- manage -- struggle with it *all.* Due to Skippy's insomnia, I had to move into our spare bedroom to get a few hours' sleep at night. Even then, I woke up several times each night to check on him. I was his wife, nurse and housekeeper, twenty-four hours, seven days a week.

Often, too often, caregivers are the ones who leave the planet *first* from sheer exhaustion. Go figure.

Now, I'll get back to my journey with Skippy and some of the trials and tribulations we've faced. I'll bet there are many caregivers who can relate. For the rest of you, *back off* and please don't judge me unless you've walked in my shoes.

Often, my agony seemed meaningless to him. In fact, if anything, it made him more determined. After all, I'd been with him and he shared more of himself with me than with any other woman. He was more vulnerable *now* than ever before. This made me a big threat. He did whatever it takes to push someone away.

So, what happens when someone refuses to go away? He takes it to the next level of testing. He'll win this one. He'll make me into every woman that ever tried to love him. He won't stop until he drives me away. Like them, I'll be forced to leave him or else go down with him. But are these my only choices?

The alcoholism is brutal. It's a horrible, selfish, all-consuming monster, but what is it that kept me here? It was the Skippy I really knew: the Skippy that came through

the beautiful aquamarine eyes, the Skippy that is *pure love* itself, the Skippy that *knew* stuff I just sense, the Skippy that was invincible, the Skippy that was indestructible; the Skippy that saved my life by helping me believe in love again. Why can't my love save him too? From himself and the alcohol demon that held his soul? How can God be so cruel as to send me my prince and then remove him, bit by bit, day by day, to alcohol?

All I know and all I hold dear in my heart tells me that I need to focus on the bigger picture in order to understand these questions. Like the cavemen burning in hell for being born before Jesus, everything in my being screams at me, 'This cannot be God's will.' And yet, I remained powerless to alter Skippy's course. As the Serenity prayer says, I must accept the things I cannot change. My rantings and ravings fell on deaf ears; my silence aggravated him. He had endured all the ploys before and was immune to them.

I pray, in God's name, to reach him in time before the brat, the resistant wounded child who's unable to trust and really open up completely, destroys the vehicle that's trying to let Skippy through. I daily had to let go and let God handle all this.

Sweetness and light helped him feel safe enough to let Skippy come through. "Be gentle and kind," he says. And I tried. I worked hard to be loving and sweet until the brat just wears me down too much and I snap. My anger flares, my rage boils and I lash out. We hurt each other and then the mental torture begins again. I've lost it again. I hate myself. I blew it again. This is clearly what I'm supposed to learn. To love, *no matter what*. I started by just staying the course through thick and thin.

Skippy has taught me many wonderful things about the natural world but he's never told me about any critters that treat themselves or their loved ones this way. Closest thing I can think of is the Tasmanian devil. The male traps the female in her den for three days of intense mating and when she decides enough is enough, she turns on him in a screaming rage until he runs away. But even that is just their usual way of getting together, it really doesn't begin to resemble this ongoing destructiveness of self and others. This seems to be a very human thing.

I always thought you should respectfully treat the ones you live with and love, the best, not the worst, of all the people in your life. I thought that even as a child, like an inner knowingness. I still have yet to experience it though.

I've treated Skippy better and still do on the good days than anyone else in my life. It's not enough, it seems. There must be more I need to learn about all this.

I know from my years as a therapist that there are many people in the world having this same challenge. There are countless Skippys who are alcoholic, drug-addicted, self-destructive visionaries and countless more who try everything to reach them and to love them through it all. I write this for all of them as well as myself and my Skippy. Skippys of the world, listen and be comforted.

While trying to remember this man is an adult, I nevertheless have come to view the real Skippy as an eternal child. He's like an autistic child, tuned into his own world and needing infinite amounts of safety, love and encouragement to focus in on this world. Autistic children have to be reached in their way and in their time. If forced, they withdraw to their unreachable world.

Recently, we saw a CNN special on the rise of autism in North America, with an alarming rate in California. Theories were explored about vaccinations, food additives etc. but no-one really knows why this is happening. I couldn't help thinking that more people would know the

experience of caring for a Skippy from this type of caregiving.

This world today is excruciatingly painful for the real Skippy. I understand that. But it's the only one we have and we need the Skippys here with us. We desperately have to find a way to reach the Skippys already here with us because they are the best indicators of what's true, real and beautiful.

The *real* Skippy has values and ethics. He won't lie or cheat or be hurtful to any living thing. He has reverence for all life. The *real* Skippy radiates joy and love to everyone he encounters. He feels things deeply move through his being and he has a unique view of the world. He has a higher vision and he knows our Creator. We must honor this, folks. It is interesting to me that autism seems to be on the rise. Perhaps more of us than we ever imagined will come to know this experience as a gift.

I understand that what my Skippy needs is a pure reflector for this vision. It's similar to a translator between two foreign languages or a bridge over the abyss of pain. Someone needs to interpret the messages of the visionary to the physical dimension into a tangible form like this book. Someone needs to *really* listen and hear and then

help him bring the vision into the physical world. Obviously, the better the translator or reflector, the clearer the vision and the better the results in manifesting the vision. This does not seem to be something my Skippy can do alone, but the challenge for him is to trust me as his reflector. I know it's hard for him. I understand how he hides behind the brat to test the waters to see if it's safe enough to risk again.

Because I understand it, I get so mad at myself when I lose it. Because I know that drives the real Skippy deeper into his private world and closes his heart to this one. I feel like I fail in my job when I do this. It probably tortures me more mentally than it does Skippy. The real Skippy is eternally forgiving. He gets over it pretty fast.

I had much more difficulty forgiving myself. That's the part I'm learning on my end. The more patient I am with myself and the more I take care of my own needs, the better things work for both of us. I've taken time-outs and sabbaticals from our relationship. I've gotten back to the truth of me and that allows me to bring renewed energy back. I'm stronger at setting limits. I'm frequently able to say *no*. I'm realizing that he can take care of himself because I can see that he really is very competent.

However, I still maintain that we cannot afford to abandon the Skippys in this world. I cannot abandon my Skippy, no matter what happens. Our Skippys represent the best and highest in this life and we are destroying ourselves if we don't find a way to reach them. Never abandon *your* Skippy. Be super patient, gentle and kind.

Don't give up on your Skippy. Go the extra mile. Do more. Take breaks when you need to. Learn to understand and get past your own limitations, but find and hold true to *your own Swan-self.* It may be the hardest thing you ever do but I believe it is the only thing worth doing.

~

UPDATE from ceci: You know from Jack's bio that my worst fears came true when he passed on, in 2004. I go into this in my next book called *Hanging Your Butt in the Breeze: Chapter 1* is contained at the end of this book.

I wondered upon rereading this if I should put it all in the past tense. Then, I realized that it is still true to this day as I live on a daily basis with Skippy's spirit. He is in my day and night dreams, constantly in my thoughts. I maintain my life according to the principles that I learned

with him. I feel much more proficient in these skills now and much more at peace within myself.

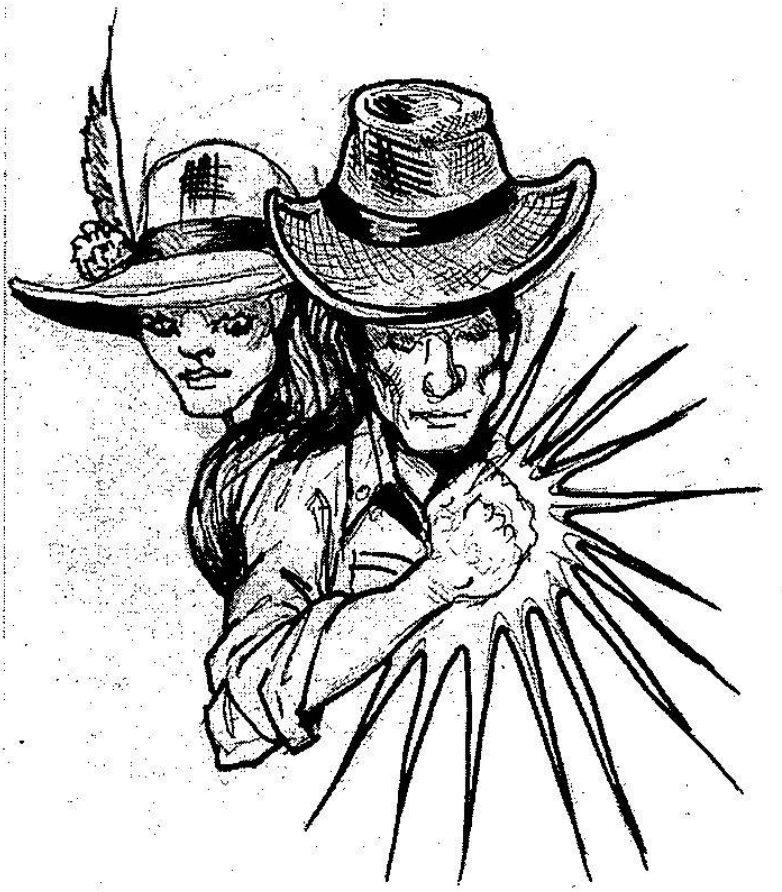
Skippy's just a lot easier to live with now. I do not even want another relationship. No one could come close to what I experienced with him. I carry the torch for both of us and continue the work we started with the knowledge that he is with me, guiding me from another dimension. I have come to understand that it is possible for love to grow even after a tragic death. In all ways, except the physical, I live today with the **real** Skippy as always in an intimately, personal sense.

I am confident we will be together again in spirit when my time comes. We will share the same dimension together once more. A love this powerful expands and carries on. I am no longer in a hurry to join him as I was for years. Living with him in my current way is enough for now. I am blessed and secure with this new knowledge.

~

CHAPTER 11

You live by the Truth



Thanks to ceci for that last chapter -- I know it wasn't easy for her to write. It chokes me up and makes me humble and it's a tad hard to continue, but with her to inspire me, I'll offer you more of my vision. I have renewed faith now, after finishing those tough disclosure chapters. Isn't love grand?

As I said before, the real Skippy lives in a world where nothing goes wrong. I wonder what that looks like? Could we even imagine it? Would we be able to accept it?

For starters, once again, I'd have no borders. Or any kind of man-made, artificial demarcation of land that our Creator never intended to be divided up and fought over anyway. I'm big on this, because I think this is where people start to separate from each other rather than unite together. For example, look at what is going on in the Middle East right now and I think you get my point. We need to *all* view ourselves as citizens of the world and stewards of the planet in order to save it.

And you see right there with that one change comes many, many more by natural extension. All people are allowed everywhere. No visas or immigration requirements. No customs. With all that freedom of choice,

people would gravitate gradually to a place that suits them best and once there would behave accordingly. Lots of folks might not even move.

I'm not worried that everyone will end up in Yelapa. Our jungle paradise is not for everyone. At least the ones who wanted to be there full time could do so. I know these people would contribute more to its welfare because they love it so much.

The new liberation would eliminate the need for military defense weapons and armies. Trillions of dollars would be released to stimulate the economy of the world. This alone would go a long way towards one world order for all.

The nay-sayers are right away going to call me too naive and too idealistic because of these ideas. It is my firm belief that we've just made things way too complicated and perhaps, if we truly desired to attain some basic truths, these things would not nearly be as difficult to accomplish as they seem at the outset. What harm can there be to at least entertaining the thoughts for while? Please indulge me -- it is my fantasy, after all.

During the period of disruption and reorganization, the training programs to educate people to front or project from *their Christ-self* would be implemented. This is the only thing I'd ever make mandatory.

You can't take something away from someone, even their misery and oppression, unless you replace it with something. We would recognize how interdependent we are on this small planet and how essential it is to live in genuine harmony. People would be thrilled to learn this eventually. Initially, there may be a lot of initial discomfort and angst. The trainers would have gentle, loving, patient ways to help people through this transition. They would understand how scary it is for adults to learn something new, which is why it is so important to start with young children.

How we get trainers would be a rigorous and detailed process. This would need to be one of the first projects to implement. There would be ongoing thorough supervision of these positions. Certain standards would be expected and enforced to start with. Setting up the programs with the right ingredients of truth and honesty is essential. I trust the details will get worked out, as God's plan unfolds.

The primary creed would be: *You live by the truth.* There go the nay-sayers again. "What is the truth?" they ask. "Are you talking about absolute truth?" "There is no such thing as absolute truth. Everyone's truth is different." Excuse me, but again, we could overcomplicate anything.

Let's try some examples and see if we can figure out the objective truth in them:

- Did you or did you not cheat on your wife?
- Did you owe someone money and not pay it back?
- Did you hit that car and then leave the scene?
- Are you at the level of intolerable frustration with your job, your boss or your spouse?
- Do you owe someone an apology for losing your temper?

You get the concept here. People *do* know the truth of their actions. We've become way too comfortable with lies, secrets, shame and hiding. We need to realize that it is time to stop that.

For any of you familiar with Eastern philosophy, *Karma means you don't get away with anything,* ever. Sooner or later, life catches up with you although it may

seem like people get away with a lot for a long time. You realize that as you evolve to *your Swan-self*, karma speeds up, so that you can self-correct faster. By then, you'd be sufficiently self-aware that corrective action is required less. You live in the truth and karma ends. It's all good from there. Positive actions resulting in affirmative outcomes allow us to go higher in our unlimited consciousness.

The soap operas are founded on this fact: someone always has some skeleton coming out of the closet when they really wish it wouldn't. While we've been told in the Bible that the truth will set us free, no one ever warned us that it will first rock your world when it surfaces again in order for us to set things straight.

One of the cornerstones of the very popular and successful Twelve Step Recovery programs is getting rigorously honest with yourself about your part in any problem. Clean up your side of the street. You can only change you. You can only do that when you take full responsibility for all of your thoughts, words and deeds. Only *you* can make your amends.

A definition of honesty that I particularly like is that you behave at all times as if someone was watching you. If you are married, imagine that someone as your spouse. At

work, that person as your boss. It doesn't really matter who; what matters is that karma operates automatically, it watches and pays attention to everything we *think, do and say*. Karma operates naturally like gravity. Now, if everyone were doing this, full time, what a different world it would be.

Don't tell me that we can't get to the truth. Frankly, I don't buy it. Sorry. Ultimately, people would govern themselves. We'd need fewer actual police, lawyers and expensive court processes as time and spiritual education went forward. There would be no hoarding or crime. We would truly treat our neighbor as our own self, because we'd realize that in oneness, my neighbor *is* myself. What's the point in stealing, hurting or killing my own self, now that I've learned to love myself unconditionally? That's a no-brainer.

Disciplinary actions, if required (especially during the transition phase), would constitute community service, as much as possible. People still clinging to bad behavior towards other humans, animals or the environment need more reminders about their true connectedness to all rather than punishment. It doesn't work. Let them serve until they come to like it.

The current state of our overburdened legal system from courts to prisons proves that. Lawyers seem to be the ones who profit the most from our judicial system and we harbor huge resentment towards them. Initially, the spiritual rehabilitation would be especially concentrated in the jails, prisons and hospitals since they represent the demographics currently in society with the greatest need.

Sociopaths, psychopaths and severely handicapped people may need to stay in confinement centers. Much of the prison population could be released and closely monitored by trained rehabilitators. The primary focus would be on their attitudes as well as their actions. Specialized trainers are not mere probation officers.

There is a show on the Internet called 'Life Inside Bali's Infamous Kerobokan Prison,' which I highly recommend as an example for attempting this. Even with severe punishment for drug trafficking such as life imprisonment or the death penalty, men and women there are living in some degree of freedom. There is a large open space where all inmates are free to wander during the day with beautiful vegetation which the prisoners maintain. All religions are allowed and there is tremendous unity as a result. Skills are offered such as learning English,

computers, arts, mixed exercise classes and jewelry making. Visitors come twice a week. Once a month, there is Family Day where all interact freely in the open space. Remarkably, there is almost no conflict or violence. The guards, on the ground, do not carry weapons and there are no attempts to escape. We could learn something from this. If only third world countries would bring their sentencing more into alignment with the crime, it could be an ideal model.

Valuing peace above all else would require disarmament for all nations on the planet. We would realize the insanity of trying to achieve peace by waging war and profiting by waging war. It is greed that we can no longer afford. The money freed up by eliminating all defense budgets would more than cover the training programs. The trainers would be the highest paid people around since they offer the spiritual leadership which we all aspire to emulate.

Salaries would now be commensurate with the rigors of the educational and spiritual leadership of any position. They would provide the true role models in the world society. Natural leaders would come forward when revealed by our Creator.

Anyone currently in the realms of politics, religion and education would be suspect and probably excluded. If they could not demonstrate the congruity that would be rigorously explored by a committee of peacemakers, they would be placed in a special training class to deprogram their rigid beliefs. Selection of that committee is again a high initial priority.

Sorry but our present leaders in these areas are rarely representative of the type of high-level functioning I'm describing here. We deserve to expect more integrity and morale fiber from our leaders. Many communities have high-functioning leaders who already have these skills. We need to encourage them to come forward to set the tone. Citizens have overcome difficult issues such as civil rights and women's rights. It shows what can be done if we all want it.

To bring things into balance, we'd also downsize the salaries of sports players and entertainers since we finally now have our priorities straight. They'd still be well compensated since we always value fun. *Just not more than truth, spiritual excellence and healthy thriving for all*.

There would be enough money in circulation from the redistribution of destructive elements that everyone's

basic needs for food, shelter and education would be met socially for their entire lives. There would be no need to work as we know it now. Work would be undertaken for creative and artistic challenge as well as scientific exploration rather than necessity. Work would be done for luxuries, personal growth and for discovering ways to improve life for all. Some people even like to have a job to go to, but it should be optional.

Empathically, I choose a world with the most important qualities being:

- All things know themselves in oneness and therefore in joy.
- Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Palestinians, Rastafarians, Catholics, Protestants, Sikhs or whatever, embrace.
- Men, women, children and nature live in peace, harmony and respect.
- We realize that our Creator is LOVE and, in that image, we behave accordingly. We know we are being watched and evaluated by higher divine laws. We reach and attain the best of the best in everyone and hurt becomes obsolete.

- We care about the ozone layer and the ecology. The animals need free range as well and protection from extinction. We clean up the pollution and stop creating more. The planet is never again threatened by the supposedly most evolved creature on it.

Again, why does all this seem like a no-brainer to me and most people don't seem to get it? Surely, ceci and I can't be the only ones who want a world like this or are we?

- I want people to walk down the streets of New York City asking, "are you okay?" without the World Trade Centre Towers being leveled to the ground.
- In my world, there's no terrorism or violence, because people have what they desire and live according to higher spiritual values. There's nothing to fight over. There's no need for border security checks. There'd be no fear.
- I happen to believe there's more abundance here on this little planet for all of us if we'd just prioritize and reorganize things, according to the highest values humans can attain. I believe we

can, as a species, choose to attain these goals now. What are we waiting for after all?

To live in a world without fear sounds like Heaven to me. Imagination takes the terror out of fear. If I imagine myself up on Jonathan charging through an obstacle, I'm much more empowered and likely to overcome it than if I see myself as an unfairly treated victim facing a bully.

Intra-psychic or mental coping defenses are among some of the most successful in dealing with severe stress such as rape or incest, according to ceci's research for her Masters' thesis. Mentally I have more options such as:

- I can take myself out of the picture by being up in the corner of the room as a dot of light.
- I can count internally or create fantasies of unlimited variations on this theme.
- Imagination has no limits. This changes my experience. Since coping only occurs under stress, altering my experience is more than likely to result in a successful outcome. Ceci's thesis has now become part of my knowledge base which proves my point because it makes my thinking clearer to have this new information. Gathering new data helps to

> increase successful outcomes also. Increasing your knowledge is a coping skill in itself. This is called empowerment. Whatever helps to make a person feel truly masterful is good.

What is required to alter my experience? How long is an instant? A split-second fraction of time, but how powerful it can be. In one instant of experience with one new thought, I release myself and an entire reality is created from that moment. My situation may be the same on the outside, but I relate to it differently now on the inside. It no longer has the ability to oppress me. My mind transcends the limitations of my condition. I mentally soar over the problem. It's like a microchip that's essential to have in order to be happy.

Since I can imagine anything -- I can never be bound. There is another way to think about everything. Haven't I been saying this all along? Have you grasped, yet, how awesome this is? All I need is one moment in time to think a different way and it's done. What seems to take forever is getting people receptive to practice thinking this way. Humans put up some brutal defenses against new ways of seeing things. People don't like change. We are typically habitual, not adaptive creatures.

Without the microchip, happiness is elusive, superficial and frequently impossible. Like Alice down the hole following the white rabbit, we encounter obstacles to our perceived happiness. We get horribly frustrated pursuing our path. We rarely stop to think about other options. We try to expand our size with rage and control. We shrink our size with fear and doubt. We can't open the door without the right key and there's only one key. Imagination or the power of the mind is the key and the door is now open to *Wonderland*. Now, anything is possible.

As mama always said: 'Mind over Matter.' The key is we make it up as we make choices. Life happens less than a second at a time and we can utilize this awesome truth to empower our situation, no matter what it is.

People in severe conditions such as prisoners of war are very familiar with the power of the mind to endure the brutality of their experience. Any single moment is enough to change it forever because the instant unlocks the imagination to do whatever it wants. We can stimulate our imaginations with books, movies; talking to inspirational, informed people, or fantasy etc.

However, In the absence of all these options, people have created their own methods for mental stimulation. We

recently heard about a group of prisoners who made up their own alphabet and tapped it out on the pipes to each other to communicate, going undetected by the guards for years. The creative techniques are as varied or as limited as people themselves.

When you combine truth and imagination, you have forces available that are as powerful and formidable as Jonathan, my 30,000-pound friend. Do not underestimate the vigor of truth and ideas. The higher truth that we need to remember here is that made in the image of our Creator, we are ultimately MIND also.

Again, we are aligning with the highest part of our own self to accomplish this liberation. It would be as natural as breathing and as freely given, if we had not been so well trained to discount our abilities. With consistent personal retraining, how could it fail? Mastery is the result of daily practice of combining both truth and imagination.

Have you noticed how much effort it takes to remember all the lies you told others, but no effort to remember the truth? It turns out that the energy released from always telling the truth goes into present moment, heightened living. We become more aware of our surroundings: colors are brighter, food tastes better, we

feel free. Why on earth would we want to bind ourselves up in lies then?

I love truth. It's freedom to me. Ride out the storm of unraveling the secrets and lies with which you've burdened your life. It's more than worth it and your highest Self will be there to guide you into the unknown and undiscovered wonderland of the mind.

To illustrate this knowledge, I'm going to give you some concrete examples of how ceci and I apply this in our lives in the remaining chapters. Watch out -- we get a bit vulnerable and we reveal the controversies of this power but hey, it's time we had some more adventures here.

The biggest thing to remember is the *intent* behind our thoughts, words and actions. Since harmlessness is the only code of our highest self, we don't have to be afraid of this power, whether we are on the delivery or the receiving end of the spectrum. If this had no practical application to everyday life, what would be the point? Dare to open your mind dear readers and boldly go -- etc.

~

CHAPTER 12

Ashleigh Evon lives

CECI came to me with unfinished business. In the course of her life, she never had a baby. Two miscarriages, infertility testing and years of heartache had failed to fulfill this burning desire within her. She buried the emotions time and time again and then the pain would come back tormenting her all over. When she came to me and we felt our connection, of course, this came to the surface once more.

Now, I've done the parenting thing big-time. I raised my one and only baby boy and I'm proud to say that he's become a strong man I can respect. He amazes me to this day and I'm so thrilled he's here with me most of the year. We get to share more than most fathers and sons. I've also raised stepchildren and foster children and basically feel complete on that whole score.

But ceci felt a hole in her soul and empty arms and so in struggling with the resolution of this, we have had a baby girl. Ashleigh Evon lives and is one of my reasons for living. She is the biggest joy of my life. Everyday becomes an adventure.

How can I describe my baby girl? She's an angel and a complete little girl -- purely loving, caring and sweet. She

loves pink and purple big-time. From the time she was three, she had to have pink shoes and only lacy, frilly, pink dresses, of course. She's always known her own mind and we never tried to change it for her.

Her auburn hair is long and curly. She has never let us cut it because she loves her hair. Her misty green eyes are the rarest on the planet so I'm told. When I look into those eyes, I see Heaven. Her small little ears and upturned nose only accentuate her pouty, pursed lips. And, man, can she pout when she's mad. She puts her lips together and goes "o-o-o" just like her dad.

She cares for her pure white unicorn, Precious, every day and won't let anyone take over the job of grooming her. She loves animals expansively because we taught her to stay in touch with her natural truth that she is connected to all living creatures.

In fact, our beautiful home is an animal menagerie. In addition to Precious, with her own little pink and purple stable, we have another area with six chestnut and black ponies. We ride a lot together all over these mountains and go on extended backpacking trips by horse. We also have thirty cats, five dogs and an aviary with 250 canaries, outside her bedroom. Oh yes, we can't forget the biggest

toad you've ever seen because he eats cat food all day. Ashleigh Evon and I collect beetles, bugs and all kinds of butterflies for her walk-in butterfly cage. She has a beautiful life here and is blissfully happy. And, of course, up on the upper range, she has Jonathan.

She's a perfect little lady at seven and can be a tomboy and a real mischief too. She loves to climb the tree-house we built together to feed the birds in the pink and purple birdhouse. She's a powerhouse of energy every day and keeps us hopping.

She dances, sings songs and romps around to music. Our house is always filled with music because she insisted on learning how to play the guitar. One day she hopes to sing in a band at this hotel. She has the most beautiful singing voice.

The sweetness that exudes from this child turns me to mush. Maybe, that's why I was always kind of scared to have a daughter. I feel so vulnerable, but it's okay. She gets past my defenses in a way no one else can. She knows how to get her way with me. And the way she came into our lives popped me open like a melon thrown on a rock. The reality of her cranked my heart apart and shattered my terror of being vulnerable. Because you see, Ashleigh Evon

is the one who brought ceci and me to a true meeting of our minds and that's why I have to tell you her story. Bottom line is that she will never get older than seven.

Ashleigh Evon is the child that ceci and I created in our minds to resolve ceci's burning need for a baby. I tell you about Ashleigh Evon to show you that no matter what the problem, there is a solution somewhere in your mind. At the risk of sounding weird, yet again, ceci has felt the empathic energy of a being around her for twenty-five years, but it never came through to her physically, as she thought it would. Nor did we ever get pregnant. It just wasn't in the cards for us.

To honor ceci's reality of this enormous energetic entity she walked through her life, but never attained, we created Ashleigh Evon and her life. To this day, Ashleigh Evon lives with us. She always will. She'll never leave us because she'll never grow old. She remains eternally seven years old in our minds. She knows who she is as pure spirit and will never forget that because she'll always be that child. She's just not on this level of physical reality but to us, she is *real* -- just like Jonathan.

Ceci gives me Jonathan and I give her Ashleigh Evon. She insists on being called by her full name. We all live

together in a one-nanosecond, alternate, imaginative, parallel reality but ceci and I also live here on this plane. We don't have a problem doing two things at once this way.

The name Ashleigh always had significance to me. Years ago, I worked at a home for unwed mothers in one of my bazillion jobs as a regular citizen. I met a woman named Ashley who affected me deeply. I always thought it was a beautiful name. I was surprised and pleased to find out that ceci had always wanted to name a baby girl Ashley also. Together we made a name spelling to allow our little one to feel special.

The Evon is to honor ceci's mother, Yvonne, because here in Mexico we celebrate mothers and virgins in a big way. Again, the spelling had to fit our imaginary girl's psychological need to be different. She's an original thinker and we encourage this. What's in a name? A lot it seems. It was an easy concession because Ashleigh Peggy (for my mother) didn't sound very good. My mom, Peggy, would have loved this little girl big-time.

Ashleigh Evon really is responsible for ceci and me coming together completely. As we started to give her life in our talks, ceci was able to see and understand that the child of her imagination was just as powerful and satisfying

as a physical child. In fact, it is even more so: there are no messy diapers or midnight feedings required and unlimited potential for adventures is achievable. Plus, it increases our shared intimacy, a worthy goal in itself.

Ceci really did start to feel better about this unresolved dilemma that had haunted her for years. She knows a physical baby isn't right for us right now. We're at a stage where we choose more freedom, not less. We have our hands full with our lives in this community. We have got more books to write and we really want to travel around the world together. Ceci has done that already and she's told me about so many great places I've never been to. I've been places in Central America and Mexico that I want to show her. We can't haul a baby around doing that, but this way, Ashleigh Evon gets to come with us always.

Now don't get me wrong, because I actually think ceci and I would make great parents now. We have patience and wisdom we didn't possess in our younger years to the same degree. We have a reverence for individuality that would let a kid grow up knowing their true self throughout life. Come to think of it, I realize that I have a lot to say about kids now in the physical world as a result of this mental creative process.

I've thought for years that you should have to apply to be a parent like to a board of child-care experts or something. You'd have to prove that you really wanted and could handle the rigors of parenting from your highest self. You'd have to submit a written document stating your philosophy of parenting from this perspective.

We must apply for licenses to fish, hunt or own a car but not parenting. This may sound harsh, but since it is the most difficult job in life, we should be more selective about who gets to do it. Perhaps then we'd appreciate children more and take better care of them.

Obviously, the ability to have sex does not qualify someone to parent. In my view, only people found fully competent by a specially selected board comprised of psychiatrists, spiritualists and other evolved parents would be allowed to reproduce. Nobody without stability would even be considered. That's to ensure you are wise enough from life experience and settled enough psychically to devote all your wisdom to your only one or two children. Limiting the number of children, despite the sex, allows for closer scrutiny. It takes a village to really raise a child well.

I know they have tried a one child policy in China but the problem is female genocide not limitations on birth

control. There, males are more valuable to the social structure than females. Already, there is a surplus of males who are unlikely to marry as there are fewer females. For me, there is equality in both sexes in order to ensure natural balance.

No one would want more anyway because, every year, you'd have to present your progress report with your child to the board. Any child not thriving would be removed to loving homes of other childless, approved couples subject to the same process of accountability. Consequently, the elders of the community would raise the children to always know, honor and front from their real childlike self. They'd never know anything but their 'Skippiness.'

Come to think of it, I'll hang my butt in the breeze here and say that if mothers, grandmothers and virgins ruled the world, it would look very different. I mentioned before that I pretty much understand women (even though ceci says I *really* never can because I'm not one,) but I'm really sure that mothers and grandmothers would legislate equal pay for equal work for women. Really excellent subsidized daycare and schools would be provided with a ratio of one adult to two children.

The daycare workers and teachers would be carefully chosen to have the combined qualities of a Mother Teresa and an Oprah. God bless these excellent role models. They would be the highest paid people in the community and the most qualified to influence our future generations. They would know the real value of this most crucial job in life.

Virgins would never have babies without a healthy, committed partner so there would be no such thing as an unwed mother or an *illegitimate* child. I never did fathom how a child could be illegitimate anyway. We are all children of God. Whoever but a suppressive patriarchal society could come up with that idea?

I bet mothers and grandmothers wouldn't let most of the money on the planet go to defense spending, war and overpaying sports players and entertainers. They'd carefully and ethically redistribute that wealth. They'd have multiple varieties of fundraisers to get education and health costs for everyone. They'd make sure every kid had a hot lunch and for that matter, they'd build shelters for the disadvantaged until there weren't any homeless.

They would give prisoners spiritual rehabilitation, retraining and exposure to the best examples in society by

which to be inspired. In fact, there would be few, if any, prisons because as I said before, any disciplinary action would require community service and increased spiritual training.

Whatever skill the rehabilitant had such as bricklaying, mechanics, or carpentry would be applied to improving a community need such as building sidewalks, renovating community property or improving the environment. We could use an infinite amount of wind farms and solar panels installed to decrease the use of fossil fuels. Those without specific skills could be given an assignment or else, if able, make a donation like fish, poultry, eggs or milk to the subsidized programs and schools. White collar criminals like lawyers or bankers could do pro bono work as compensation. The idea is to maximize the strengths of each individual and be flexible to accommodate their needs and abilities.

Now I know that mothers and grandmothers would never send their babies to die in a war. They would declare war illegal. War would be irrelevant anyway, once there are no borders to fight over. There's world unity and racial, political and religious tolerance for all. Plus, when mothers rule, everyone obeys.

All the competitive energy on the planet would be directed into creative and artistic expression. People would be encouraged to exceed their own limitations and ever constantly expand their creative potential. We could have more peace games similar to the Olympics based on excellence of achievement instead of life and planet-threatening war games.

Oh boy, here I go. This is really getting me on a roll and I'm not quite finished with my Ashleigh Evon story. This is a good example of what happens in the mind which is one of the main things that I want to share with you. Mind flows like a river and the better you are at paying attention to it, the more mastery you learn to have over it. One thing connects to another and before you know it, you are way off on six different tangents. How we got to war and lunch meals from Ashleigh Evon would be beyond me if it weren't recorded. Now we are on to women. Oh, dear, don't get me started on virgins.

At the risk of another tangent, if you bear with me, I'll wrap this up. I'm always fascinated by the workings of the mind and following where it goes like the migration of butterflies or the spirit flowing through this home of ours. Who knows where it comes from; where it goes? Is it really

so important that we know? To me, the answer to that question was always a resounding *yes*. What is the source? I have a need to know these things. Don't you?

Here comes a thought and let's follow it to see where it goes. It's like taking another journey. The destination is a mystery and an adventure. See why I say that I exist in my mind.

It brings to the forefront of my consciousness a client ceci told me about in her former existence as a therapist. I'll call all her clients Skippy because I feel those of us searching for truth in therapy are feeling the eternal inner child's call whether we go for one session or one thousand. Some pain hurts badly enough to search for an answer. That sounds like Skippy to me who got hurt so constantly and relentlessly looked for truth to ease that pain. For ceci's sake, thanks to all the Skippys out there who took care of my sweetie until she was ready for me. Thank Goodness she had all of you to love until I got big enough to unconsciously send for her.

But wait a minute -- at the risk of frustrating you totally -- rather than go off on that tangent, another compelling thought is pressing on me. Isn't that the way your mind works? One thought is taking hold of you in one

direction and then all of a sudden, a fierce, urgent thought comes in and takes you somewhere totally different. Often, I really hate it when that happens. I have also come to trust it though because I tend to find a thread of connection between them all if I keep track. Often it provides a higher lesson for me when I tie all the threads together.

I'm in trouble here with ceci. Instead of telling you about her client, ceci is pressuring me to delete this chapter altogether. Here are some of her thoughts about why it should go:

- Everyone will just think we're nuts.
- This is too private and personal to share with the world.

  (It doesn't help to remind her at this moment that the book is called 'Now It's Personal' – best to let her rave a bit.)
- No one could possibly understand.
- No one could possibly relate.
- We'll upset and offend people.

Do you ever have doubts like that? Even when you know something works for you, as this does for ceci and me, do you still feel nervous about sharing it with others? Do you ever think that people will think you are nuts if you

disclose the inner workings of your mind and heart? Why on earth do we care so much about what other people think? Will they approve? Will they condemn? Will they relate? Who really gives a _____?

We get so obsessed in what others think and how they feel that we discount ourselves right into silence. We hide: we clam up, we don't take risks, we stifle our vital life-force energy, we block ourselves. How did that ever get started? How is that ever going to help and change things for the better if we allow that to continue?

We have to stop and deal with this, *first.* A big part of this book is revealing the process ceci and I go through as we walk through life's challenges to help others understand the complexities of couple decision making. Life is a journey and the couple's process of conflict resolution is one of the cornerstones of successful relating. Now, this has become the priority in my thinking. How do I help ceci with her vulnerability and what do we decide about letting this chapter be the way it is?

I attempt to console her -- the only one you have to please lives inside of you. The only one to satisfy is you. In fact, ultimately, you are *only* accountable to your own highest self and your own honest truth. Also, in

vulnerability lies great strength as you have nothing to hide and live in total openness. Our Creator loves that because then spirit can really work in your life.

Does this method make you happy? Does this work for you? Does it work for me? Does it hurt anybody? Can we still function in the physical world while enjoying this fantasy? If it does work and we are happy with it, what difference does it make to anyone else? Even if only one person related that would make it worthwhile, but we probably couldn't live off the royalties of the book. If so, we'd find some other way to get by in life.

The truly wonderful thing about imagination is that there's room for everything there. It is not dysfunctional, codependent (man, I hate that word but I won't get into that now) or denial to formulate a unique way to think about a problem. Now, perhaps if you never did anything but fantasize, there could be some negative side-effects. You could lose touch with what's real.

In this case, with a longstanding, unresolved dilemma of twenty-five years, finding a creative solution like this to pour that energy into and acknowledging Ashleigh Evon's presence in this book is healthy. Darn anyone who says it's not. I'm just so glad my sweetie finally

has some semblance of relief in this area and we continue to have fun with it.

Like I said a while ago, where is it ever written that you should feel bad about feeling good? *Get there whatever way you can without hurting anyone or yourself.*

There are other things we make ourselves feel bad about. Like, if we know something within ourselves that no one else seems to relate to, such as having an intuition that something may happen or being able to see auras. The brat has to be strong enough to stand on her own Christ truth even if no one else can identify or understand. She should never have to feel bad about this truth of hers.

Surely our loving Creator, who designed us as original thinkers and who loves us unconditionally no matter what we do will never reject us for honoring the truth pouring into our spirit. *Even if we are the only ones to get it.*

You know, I bet if women ruled the world, Jesus could come to earth again and not get crucified.

Now I know I've taken you a long way from the topic of this chapter, if you think it is about Ashleigh Evon. Really, I'm trying to give you as much of a living example of

how to feel good about yourself mentally and how to be free of any adversity. The freedom of the imagination and the power of individuality are potentially unlimited. However, there is a profound responsibility in it and since I've started three stories without finishing them, I'll do that now. You can't leave people hanging. They hate that.

First of all -- which concludes the Ashleigh Evon story as an application of fantasy to a life problem, ceci and I have decided together to be brave enough to get this out as is. We will risk ridicule and I'll protect her whatever way I can from negative press over it. I believe in this. I believe in her and I support her.

Second -- the client ceci worked with was very much like me and helped her get ready for me. He would go off on several different stories within stories and ceci got really good at tracking all of them, helping him complete his mental journey. That's made it possible to rein in my roaming and try to make sense of it. He was the one that helped her understand the translator thing that I needed so much. So, thanks, guy, for helping her figure this out years ago. You know who you are.

Finally -- today ceci does not have empty arms. Even without a physical baby, Ashleigh Evon has given her

immense peace about this. She's happy to cuddle kittens, cats and dogs and always me. There are oodles of kids in our community that she connects with. Her maternal instincts are more than satisfied and we get to maintain our freedom.

It was a great transitional solution all the way around to help her open up to the world. Don't give us grief about it. It is very important to her that you really know she's very much okay with herself now so she can also let go of the fear about this chapter. Myself, I have undying faith that many people will understand and relate.

I understand ceci's vulnerability. Why do you think I never told anyone about Skippy and Jonathan until now? Now, I see from this summary that the threads have come together to show me that no matter where the mind takes you, there are inherent risks which have to be addressed and overcome. Life is fundamentally risky but that makes it interesting. That's what allows us to grow into *our true Christ-self.* True freedom is the ability to rise above these adversities and discover your own flow of mind and experience. So, I think we can conclude the chapter on this note.

Oh no -- now I'm in trouble *again.* Sometimes I just don't get away with anything: am I the only one this happens to? After having read this to ceci, she's now mad that I never gave the virgins a proper introduction. She says everyone will be baffled and confused. "Virgins, what's that about?" everyone will ask. I told you Mexico's big on them as was England, for the matter, because Prince Charles had to have one to marry or he'd get no approval from the Queen. This was in spite of his true love, Camilla.

Anyway, in order to conclude this chapter, I have to let you meet the virgins. Sorry, I didn't do it properly. They're big on manners. Watch out world, they'll be here in further depth for the next chapter. They represent what is pure and innocent in all of us. Can you imagine Princess Diana and Mother Teresa sitting in Heaven telling our Divine Creator about their experiences on earth? Take a leap with me on this one.

Now, I imagine they'd be taking afternoon tea with the Virgin Mary and of course She'd have to feed them. Our Creator has a Mother mode after all, as well as a Father mode -- duality is not a problem here at the divine level -- only at the human one. They would give the Holy Mother an earful over hot scones with jam, watercress sandwiches,

tea and probably a little brandy because it wasn't an easy time for either one of them. One took the path of austerity and the other the path of opulence, but both were very tough roads in their own ways. Their cups overflowed with compassion and empathy. These are two of our essential leadership qualities.

The Divine One already knows that. The Virgin Mary would have the formula for debriefing their traumatized souls. They would be listened to, heard and understood. The Holy Mother mode created them after all. What Mother doesn't want to help and heal Her babies?

~

UPDATE from ceci: It is true to this day that I continue to sense the empathic energy of a being around me at all times. I feel someone watching me always, holding me accountable. It is immensely comforting to me now. At first, I felt very self-conscious.

While this imaginary child, Ashleigh Evon, served some immediate purposes years ago, it does not fully grasp the enormity of the presence I experienced before and after

we enjoyed this fantasy. That was more like a game I played with Skippy.

I have come to believe that this child is actually the spiritual presence of Skippy who is the eternal child of God. We were connected in spirit before we met in the flesh and continue to be after his physical passing. Now I experience Skippy at a far deeper level. I couldn't really understand or appreciate this fact until I had grieved for Jack for many years. At the end of this book, Chapter 1 from *Hanging Your Butt in the Breeze,* explores that trauma in more depth.

~

CHAPTER 13

I hate opera but I love Oprah

Since this book is about being personal, this is when we start delving into a deeper level. One mind means that I have a relationship with *everyone* and *everything.*

Think about what that means for a moment -- it means I can communicate to anyone, anything (like a bird or a tree), anytime, in my mind. I am responsible for my thoughts. They do make an impact on others because at the highest level, we are all connected.

This is easier than ever to imagine because of technology. The Internet allows us to have world-wide access to everyone hooked up to it as well as information galore. Mental transmission is a method that does not require an Email address or even a telephone. It takes no time and is effortless. It happens in my mind so it is not essential to have permission to have my one-sided communication, but it is nice to get a response sometimes.

Since only a thought is required, in regards to people, it is as true for the ones I live with and love -- as those I admire. The thoughts also extend to the ones I've never met before who live on the other side of the planet or, even in outer space, or in the afterlife dimension.

Star Trek did a show one time where, in order to solve a big world problem, they invited every mastermind living or dead to a major think tank session. Einstein was there as was Freud, Stephen Hawking, Pluto, Socrates, Jesus etc. Can you imagine the energy in that room? Well, in addition to being a fly on that wall, I would have my own cast of characters show up to amuse me in my mind.

Now that's intense, but it's fun and very liberating. Let's see what this looks like in practical terms. I warned you we might get extreme sometimes. Hang in, you can handle it.

Do you live with someone who loves something that you hate? What are your internal thoughts about this issue? Can you *really* conceal your opinions? It doesn't have to be big. Like, all of a sudden, ceci found her 'Phantom of the Opera' tape after losing it for a few years and this has rekindled her love for it. All it's done for me is remind me how much I hate opera.

Isn't this typical of living with someone? Everything's going along great then suddenly, opera. But I mention this to illustrate a point. Life flows and you never know where it takes you, so around a corner, here comes a snag. Typical. As I love to say: man plans, God laughs.

I'd hoped to take you into the problem of acceptance of love and how I relate it to nature in this chapter. Now, I remember that I promised ceci, I'd give the virgins' voices a top priority.

But come to think of it, if I block her out on this, then it would show that I had a problem with *accepting* a new and powerful incoming direction for the flow of spirit. How could the Christ in me have a problem with acceptance?

The Christ is the force of acceptance and unconditional love -- no attachment to the outcome, infinite patience and tolerance for all. The Christ would never have a problem like this. Darn, I hate it when ceci's right and I am -- not wrong but rather, in need of information or patience. Grrr -- obviously, in all humility, I've still got some stuff to learn, too.

Okay, so pull it together here. I'm beginning to see a higher plan for this book than I'd originally imagined. Our Creator works in mysterious ways, the wonders to behold. As a man who's now out there with a public claim that I understand women, I have to admit that females are pressing me to change my thinking on a number of items and represent them in this book. Because I understand women, I'm going to because I frankly haven't seen men do

a great job. Besides, I warned you a long time ago in Chapter 5, 'Beware Women,' that they weren't nearly through.

As a human male, my ego likes to be right and macho. But, truthfully, the Christ in me can't wait to hear what the women have to say.

Just one sec more before the virginal takeover while I tell you the creative solution ceci and I made to the 'Phantom' music. I do not want to leave you hanging on that count at the beginning. We were quite proud of this. Don't mistake this for a compromise, please because it worked for both of us. Ceci would put the music on and, often, gave me a massage at the same time. She played out the music on my sore muscles and since the singers are not screaming in Italian, I had to admit I even enjoyed the music. We both shared the awesome power in that music in a way that we could both accept it. So maybe we really are learning the process of acceptance. Thank you, Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Now the virgins won't wait, so here goes. Virginity (they demand to be clear on this right away) is not only a thing of the flesh but of the soul and of the *one mind*. Virginity speaks to the purity of hearing the highest truth (our highest thoughts, if you like) in us and only being able

to live accordingly. The Virgin *is* the Christ in us and more. They are equal, but the Virgin is the ultimate knowingness and oneness with the Creator (the Holy Father/Mother, giver of life) symbolized by a woman -- the female experience, in other words.

The Virgin's agony and ecstasy was unlike the agony and ecstasy of the Christ. Because the Virgin soul alone, the female consciousness, can bear the purity of the Christ and give birth to that highest truth, the ecstasy of that is unparalleled. Think about it. Something bigger than Christ to contain *the Christ.* Then she witnesses what happens to that purity in flesh when it descends to the physical plane. Her agony knows no bounds. How dare they destroy her baby? -- Her ultimate truth. How dare they not love, honor and protect the unfathomable gift of knowingness and oneness that they were given by the Creator?

Now, if you think about this at a thought level, what often happens to our purest thoughts? What usually happens to our truth? We often immediately put up our resistance: our walls come up or we meet with external opposition from others. Translating the purity of the mind and soul to physical reality invariably dilutes it, contaminates it or blocks it. The Virgin mind is not very

accessible on the physical plane, either to our own selves or to others. This is our ultimate betrayal of the Divine Creator and is the source of our pain. Blocking God is our free will, just not our best option.

That's all the virgins want to say for the moment, kind of a hit and run thing. They know true authentic power and instinctively know how much people can handle at any given time. Make no mistake -- they'll be back. They do ask that you think about how close to your own truth you feel you are right now, in your own heart. That's where they live and call to you. Are you living your best life? With that, whew, we're off the hook for now. Virgins can be intense.

Now I can complete my intention for this chapter which is to balance out the challenges of living with someone with the rewards since I've fulfilled all my promises. To that end, thanks also to ceci, I have fallen in love with Oprah. Now, instantly, apprehension arises in me. This illustrates my point about how hard it is to front or project with your truth. The translation to the physical plane (such as this book) can pressure you to block your internal reality.

I don't know copyright laws very well and since Oprah has more money than most people, if she sued me, I'd have to hide deep in the jungle for all eternity. I do know how to do that fortunately, but I happen to think she's bigger than that and, in fact, may even really enjoy what's to come. I can only hope this is received in the spirit it is intended as an act of love. That is out of my control.

Oprah, dear, please hear this from my heart -- I have to be true to my convictions and since '*NOW, IT'S PERSONAL'* for all of us, I figured I'd start with my relationship with you to illustrate my point of connecting minds in this chapter. I hope I am not making assumptions or overstepping my bounds. Consider this a private but open letter to you – yet it is intended to benefit all.

Think about this -- you and I are one in mind and we have an ongoing relationship, even though we have never met. At the risk of your feeling vulnerable, I know you very intimately on a soul level and I intuit that your search for a higher truth is not complete. I doubt this is an earth-shattering surprise to you or anyone else.

As if nobody has noticed, this is one awesome phenomenon in female form. Does Oprah do the world proud or what, being her *real* self? Talk about the best of

the best. She definitely has achieved mastery in this life on many levels.

I have to admit I've really only started to pay attention to this beautiful soul since I've known ceci. Sorry, Oprah. I've just had my attention elsewhere, mostly on politicians, not celebrities. What follows here is what I've learned about you to make me fall in love with you since I connected with ceci. It's made me curious about some other celebrities, I have to admit. I hoped I was deeper than that, but now I see people are people and some people in the public eye, like you Oprah, are making an awesome impact on some of us in the world. You are getting our attention, but I realize your integrity that does not allow you to become a dogma, as in the Church of Oprah or Goddess Oprah. Although I bet, with your creativity and resources, you could be President without habitual limitations.

Even so, ceci puts you up there in the company of Mother Teresa, Princess Diana, and Gandhi as an exemplary role model for extending spirit in human flesh. It's elite company to be sure. The wisdom of Mother Teresa or Gandhi that you have doesn't compare to the vulnerability that you unfailingly show as Princess Diana did.

Apart from your sexual abuse history, ceci has watched you battle fried chicken and grits over the years and has enormous compassion for your willingness to honestly disclose all this to your viewing audience.

Over the years, you have consistently presented a quality, informative and inspiring show that has touched the hearts of many men and women. Thanks so much for that -- the world is so much more enlightened because of you alone. Wow, you're one ballsy female Skippy. I'd be honored to have you say you are my friend. You top my hero, Clive Cussler, for an attentive forum, but he's into deep sea thriller fiction. *You are real* and relentlessly into *reality*. I have no doubt our Creator blesses you for all you've done for humanity.

You know, it seems so tough for humans to be vulnerable. How did you ever get the strength to go public with this? You're braver than I am. I guess the weight thing was hard to hide. Ceci remembers that show when you came on a gaunt shadow of your former self. To be honest, she was horrified. She thought you'd sold out to the Barbie doll image when you are perfect the way you are. The *average* woman could finally relate to someone like you in the public eye and then you went for the Cover Girl look.

Diana couldn't fight that. She had it in spades. It's okay, ceci got over it. It doesn't matter to her what you look like. But, forgive me because she has some thoughts about it that she wants me to share with you if you're interested.

Man, how do I let her talk me into these things? Oh, yeah, I remember. She's my Wonder Woman, the love of my life. Good reason.

Okay, Oprah, listen up. Ceci, being the sensitive person she is, senses that your weight challenge stems from your expansive being. It is what I refer to as your Skippy or your eternal inner child if you like. It is necessary to expand more on the inner planes and not the outer physical one. I'm sure you already know how the knowledge of this works: as within, so without is the way the Bible expresses it. I offer this information to others who may not know.

You, Oprah, like many people, have no choice but to expand your inner being and your love -- *your real Swan-self* -- the Skippy of your soul. Spirit doesn't care how it expands so long as it *does* by extending the love vibration. Loving a puppy can be as meaningful to someone as loving a person is to another. Oprah, you are definitely a model for

expansion and the more you raise your consciousness of your Skippy, the more fulfillment you create.

But what area do you expand into? You probably have enough houses by now, right? Don't you have enough animals? Are you feeling the need for more free time to enjoy a slower, easier pace? Or have you more to gain from fame? Ceci noticed you're not into jewelry like most women. What are you really going to do with all that money?

Your highest self knows you can't work any harder. However many shows a week you do and run that huge corporation in a personal way at the same time is more than enough. You have done a superb job of conducting your life so as not to be fodder for the tabloids. That's not easy to accomplish alone.

Your fantastic, new magazine keeps ceci going down here because Mexico doesn't get your show. Why is that? We need you here too. In fact, haven't you been drawn to Mexico or at least harbored a desire to retreat to a sunny, tropical place? Haven't you been thinking more and more about what else is missing? It's your highest self calling you. It's imperative to pay more attention to that. Work is

not all there is to life. You have something else to do in order to truly be a fulfilled master of life.

Here, I get to present my intention to talk about the power of acceptance. Oprah –- accept it. You can't *prevent* expansion. You have done wonders so far. Now the trick is finding a way to expand your consciousness even more.

These are tips for all of us:

- Follow incoming green growth lights. Spirit loves to give us hints through coincidences. Pay attention to them rather than dismiss them.
- Watch the recurring messages and be receptive to intuitive feelings even more than you are at present. Meaning: where in life are you getting a green light to expand your consciousness in a way that doesn't create more work or more stress on your body?
- Where in life is your joy calling to you? Some people know much about this already or they wouldn't be successful. What I'm saying is that spirit must have yet another calling for us all or our unique tension problems would be over by now. That is the indicator that more is available and we need to stop fighting it.

As you know, we tend to recreate our old patterns when we block our growth somehow. Oprah, I sense that I know what you need, if you can accept it -- and I'm going to tell you here. Are you attracted to anything powerfully uplifting, satisfying, expansive and healing?

You are the light of the world, remember. *All of you*. For you, Oprah, to feel that you are growing more, you need to turn inward more often. Trust me on this -- it is just my humble opinion. The external world still holds too much attraction for you. I know you cancelled your book club because you weren't reading anything new and different to grab your soul. I rest my case that you still need something powerful and uplifting.

While you move in an elite group of awesome women (like Gail, Maya Angelou, Cher, Madonna, to name a few), I maintain that you have a greater power to realize and a much vaster range of influence. You could be one of my spiritual trainers, for example and work with ceci on this. I believe you share a connection with her on a different level that transcends time and space. You are truly soul sisters.

On a different note to illustrate one mind, remember how Rosie had a crush on Tom Cruise and finally got him

and Nicole on her show together. She demonstrated that oneness in putting out the intention to honor the connection she felt with him -- she wasn't out to marry him obviously. It worked and I don't believe it was because they were celebrities: I believe he couldn't resist the power of the love he felt *from* her. He could have just ignored it all, but since it came so freely from her heart, he was powerless to resist. Isn't Nicole a class act? She handled the whole thing so well. It showed that people are accessible to each other from the power of love, as you are to me, Oprah.

Like Rosie, we are not stalkers or weirdos out to hurt you. Well, we may be weird but in a good way. We just love you and immensely admire your integrity. Real love is no threat. Nicole knew that. Tom did also. I'm quite surprised that they broke up because they seemed so in tune with each other -- but who knows all the inner workings of couple hood? I wish them all the best.

The difference with us is that, at the moment, in writing this, Skippy and ceci are not famous and no one even knows about us. Part of the reason for this chapter is to enlighten our readers that people can know from incoming clues what is coming *when they are aware.* What are the signs? What are the symbolic bread crumbs that

Spirit leaves along the path to bring us home to our real selves? When Spirit calls, who can truly resist? Half the fun of the journey is to see how Spirit gets our attention.

I can't wait to find out how the One Mind gets to someone. Karma means what goes around comes around. Sending out consistent positive thoughts will eventually prompt a similar universal response. I have faith that it will in divine time although it may come in a way you don't expect. I'll give you a clue about how we thought that we shared a date with *your* destiny, Oprah. It was serendipity at work.

In my hotel in Mexico, I employ a woman who is your human double. She works in the kitchen and does housekeeping in the cabins and every day to go home, she and her girlfriend swim across the bay for exercise. One day, ceci met her on the river path and she was wearing a ball-cap with the name Cecilia on the front. Ceci just about fell over. Imagine. Here was her Oprah look-alike, wearing a Cecilia ball-cap. She came home so exhilarated.

Ceci has been dreaming about you, Oprah, for many years now. Anyway, at the point we got sent to jail (oh-oh, I'm getting ahead of myself as that's the next chapter. Sorry), ceci finally had worked up her nerve to ask this

woman to work personally for us. She felt she needed to be around her energy for inspiration, but then we got redirected, so I guess ceci really didn't the daily reminder. That's the way it goes sometimes. I've known for a while that ceci's further along than she gives herself credit for and doesn't really need such symbolic gestures. She enjoys them nonetheless.

Now Oprah, I apologize if I've been *too* personal here. If our meeting never comes to pass, know that there is another expansive being that really holds you in great esteem for the spiritual high-mark that you have already attained in this life. Ceci is internally congruent with where you are even if she has not chosen the public eye to play in. I need to make it clear these are mostly ceci's thoughts and feelings, but I'm using them because I hope to communicate to others through this chapter. You of all people understand the power of example, I know.

While honesty can be tough, it is also necessary when it is coming from *your Swan-self*. Ceci is like your sister Swan-self in the jungles of Mexico and she truly respects you. She is like your own self but in the shadows still. You both think alike -- she already completes your thoughts on the show when she gets a chance to see you.

It's similar to the kind of intimacy that I share with her, but obviously she knows me better already.

I suspect it is this quality of intimacy that we all crave why you and ceci may be on a trajectory destiny line together. The thinking of the oneness consciousness is the only real Intimacy that lasts forever across time and space for eternity, but you must have two receptive communicators. Does this sound attractive to you? I mean no offence to you by selecting you as an example for this approach. I figure you're already spiritually expanded enough to handle this. I'm only putting the idea out into the physical plane for everyone to consider.

In conclusion, I've gone from embracing the 'Phantom of the Opera' to integrating Oprah, thanks to my sweetie, ceci. No wonder we all put up walls, psychologically or otherwise, to keep people out. When you open up to let people in, you never know where you're going to end up. But, truthfully, I can't wait to find out what's next. It sure makes life what life is: an adventure. What I've noticed, though, is that if this new thing is being introduced from *our Swan-selves*, it's all good.

~

UPDATE from ceci: Oprah did move to a warm, sunny place -- in Hawaii. She tried to get a network called 'OWN,' but was not very successful. Perhaps Skippy was right -- that her expansion was meant for another level altogether. Opening a school for girls in Africa is on the track of spiritual evolution. I suspect there is much more that she could still undertake. Time will tell.

No matter what, she remains one of my heroines in this life. Even if Oprah never does anything else, her contribution to this planet has been significant. I've accepted that I will probably never meet her, but I am proud to say I have been profoundly touched by her.

For those of you who are uncomfortable with me talking directly to Oprah, you are entitled to your opinion. I make no excuses for looking at role models of the highest integrity caliber at the top of the spectrum. We need what they already have: high level communication and leadership skills. Meaningful, effective change can't come with examining the bottom of the heap.

Perhaps with time and practice, you'll become more at ease with the idea of connecting with someone in your mind. Who would you most like to talk to?

Here's a fun fact of synchronicity: I just finished editing this chapter and decided to take a break. I only have Internet, not cable. I surfed for a short bit and *for the first time ever* came to an Oprah show. She is interviewing Betty Broderick. Famously, in the late 90's, Betty murdered her ex-husband and his new wife in cold blood in their own bed. Oprah never did back away from a controversial story. That's one of my favorite things about her.

I told you spirit has its own flow for making connections. I get to spend some time with Oprah *now*. It still blows my mind when these types of events happen, but I love it and do not believe in coincidences. To me, these incidents are spirit at work in my life. Everything happens for a reason. Best to figure out what the reason is.

~

CHAPTER 14

Skippy goes to jail

Imagine finding yourself in a Mexican jail, not arrested, but just detained. You face spending the night on a plank bed with no mattress with a toilet that would gross you out. Half a dozen policemen in black uniforms were walking around with revolvers and shotguns.

Since this detention is just a civil matter, ceci and I were treated very well and were taken to a more comfortable location in the jail. After a few hours, they stopped locking the cell door and then didn't even close it. They brought us hamburgers, coffee, pop, fruit and chocolate. They even gave us the Commandant's bathroom to use. They fixed up a bed with a mattress for us in their storage room so we didn't sleep on the wood beds or the concrete floor.

However, here in Mexico, even with a civil dispute among my business partners, the police can come and take you off to jail. It's just how they do things here.

We sat there waiting for my partners to arrive to settle this and we believed that if they didn't show up in the next few hours, we would be free to go again. They could only hold us twenty-four hours apparently. We would see about that.

The point of this chapter is not to go into the long, boring conflict between my partners and me. People have been misunderstanding me or not listening to me most of my life, so what else is new? The point is that even under the most adverse conditions you can still have a good time and handle it from your highest self.

We made friends with the police. We asked them their names and got to know them a little personally. We apologized for involving them in a gringo problem in Mexico. They hated that. They had enough to deal with among their own people, let alone us foreigners. They wanted us to settle our own affairs, but if we can't for some reason, then they were forced to get involved. We exchanged bad English from them and worse Spanish from us. We laughed about whatever we could and basically presented a light touch. In gratitude for not being hostile to them for doing their jobs, they treated us like royalty to the best of their ability. In fact, they just came in to take our lunch order.

The jail was located right behind the church in the beautiful, main town square of El Tuito. In the evening, we heard the bells and the people sang and prayed while we played cards in our unsupervised, open cell. The picture of

the Virgin of Guadalupe hung right outside our door. Trust a virgin to be here, when you least expect it and most need it.

With the friendship of the police and surrounded by such sweetness, we felt embraced by love and safety. They even let us walk around the square in front of the jail. They just watched us: they knew we wouldn't go anywhere else.

I told you that the brat expects trouble and while I must take responsibility for creating my part in this, jail is just another experience. Jails are run by jailers who are people, after all. When you can find a way to be kind to them, it becomes a much better experience.

Perhaps the embarrassment of holding the patron (head honcho) of a well-known hotel and his espousa (wife) for the night is what caused a flurry of cleaning up around us first thing in the morning. The policemen swept, tidied and rearranged their storage room to make it nicer for us. Or for ceci alone, I'm not sure. We're even thinking this might be a nice place to stay for a while until this ongoing partnership war settles down. They checked on us almost hourly asking, "todo bien?" (is everything alright?)

I really think these police get a bad rap, although here they are not beyond getting physically aggressive with criminal types. In fact, I hoped we get out of there before anything like that happens. Neither ceci nor I needed to witness that.

We're tackling some problems that predated ceci's arrival, but probably got compounded by her presence in my life. My partners seem to be pretty threatened by strong women. Go figure -- like lots of men I know, so it's not just a problem they have.

The main thing we've gotten from this is that we can be picked up on a moment's notice and removed to jail. While there, we could still find some peace within ourselves in relating kindly to the police and with each other as we support each other to hang in through this. Sometimes working through adversity is when you show your true self. Grace under fire.

Oh yeah, and the natural world is in jail too. We watched a tiny spiny fence lizard running around, gobbling up ants. Of course, the difference between us and him is that he can go over the wall anytime. He never stops being free. We, on the other hand, get to benefit from the life lesson of confinement and limitation.

Day two and we were still there. See, that's why I said we'd see what happens. What we thought from the broken translations was supposed to happen, didn't and so we waited yet another day for my partners to arrive to settle this. I hit a bad patch physically and the police took us both to the hospital to make sure I was alright. These guys were so good to us.

That day at 6:00 p.m., we finally found out the problem was a trumped-up charge to which we agreed to a quick solution since there was no other way around it. We still had to wait for them, their lawyers and a negotiator, to come to sign the agreement -- in quadruplicate, with numerous signatures, thumbprints beside each signature for both ceci and I and my two partners, etc. The bureaucracy here is unbelievable. But again, *acceptance* is the key because this is the way they do it here and we are guests in their country.

Clearly, I had lots of time to reflect on things, as I sat there in the early morning chill wrapped in a blanket. I remembered a guy I knew years ago named Charlie who lived in Key West. He sat every day wrapped in a blanket, despite the heat, on a park bench with an unlit cigarette hanging out of his mouth. His hair was matted and when he

began to stink too bad and offend the tourists, the police would rather lovingly pick him up, take him to jail, wash him and his blanket, feed him and let him go. You see, they knew his story.

Years before, he'd fallen asleep with a lit cigarette and burned his house down. He got out alive, but his wife and four children died in the fire. He never recovered from the guilt. Sometimes the human tragedy just seems insurmountable, but this man still found loving care from police, of all places, even then.

The difference is that I was not consumed with guilt for my actions. I told my partners I was retired and wanted my original contract back in effect. That agreement allowed me and my partner room and board at the hotel for thirty years. That way ceci and I would have a home.

My partners had tricked us to evacuate my lodging in the hotel. When we realized the betrayal, we moved back to my cabin in protest. Without our knowledge, they started charging us daily and the police were called to evict us when the bill hit three thousand U.S. dollars.

Sometimes in taking a strong stand to right a wrong, you invite adverse reactions, but it's okay. Originally, ceci

and I were threatened by the unknown actions against us and then with a solid agreement with my partners, we were facing a new exciting beginning.

While we really weren't sure how this would unfold, we had great faith that the unrelenting stress we'd been under for several years would soon be behind us. Ceci and I can still love ourselves and each other. While no one may have understood or appreciated our stand to take back my assigned cabin, it nevertheless spearheaded everything into resolution one way or another. I don't believe in guilt. *I don't do guilt*. Guilt sucks. If you did something wrong, correct it. Don't do it again.

What I think affected Charlie, the homeless man in Key West, is actually shame. From that, there is no recovery except a spiritual awakening. It sticks to you like glue or tar such that only a power greater than your own self can relieve you from the unrelenting pain. I'll never forget that man, ever. I've devoted a whole chapter to shame later. It's a dark side that is big and important. People have to get a grip on this destructive human emotion and the first step is knowledge about the tenacity of it.

So long story short, we spent about fifty-five hours in jail and we found out a few things. The clock doesn't

start ticking until the police handed the documents to the lawyer which was about six hours after we were picked up. The partners never did arrive, just their lawyers and the mediator. They can hold you for forty-eight hours before releasing you *and* the police are *not* required to feed you in Mexican jails.

The Commandant and a younger officer bought us all our food and drinks from their own pocket money. It is the responsibility of friends and family to feed you in jail, but the police there obviously figured out early that our associates would not take care of us. That was a very humbling piece of information for us, both for the kindness of the Mexican police and the lack of support from our American so-called friends.

Oh, and it made the policemen behave like teenagers on the day ceci sunbathed in her bikini on the cell floor as if it were the playa (beach). I doubt that they'd ever seen that in their jail before. As macho as they can be, they became like adolescent boys, all awkward and tripping over each other, with ceci parading around in her bikini. These Mexican men know the power of female.

I hope you have gathered by now that I'm not afraid of my brat self. Honesty means you'll own up to whatever it

is you've done, like substance abuse or business problems. No cover-ups. No shame. I'm a human, not a saint. Sorry to disillusion the guru seekers in the crowd. Because, trust me, I do everything for a reason and here's the reason why I shared our jailbird experience. This chapter is for all the *real* jailbirds out there. May our loving Creator bless you.

I truly don't know how you do it, being imprisoned for extended lengths of time. I can tell you the only way I'd be able to do it. A little story illustrates my point. There were two men in jail, looking out through the bars. One said, "I see the mud." The other said, "I see the stars." Somehow, I suspect that the one who saw the stars would handle the experience better than the other. You choose to see what you see, but your attitude determines what you do see. Does your thinking take you high or low?

Again, the brilliant movie 'Shawshank Redemption' bears repeating to illustrate the point. The main character shut himself in the warden's office and played an opera on the stereo. This would not have been my choice. I would have picked Grateful Dead, Jimmy Buffett or John Denver. There's that opera again. Ugh. Although now I could play 'Phantom of the Opera,' come to think of it.

Anyway, for one or two moments, you could tell everyone's mind in the yard went free with the music. They collectively, en masse, went over the wall mentally. Their minds were released for an instant -- *a profound, life-altering instant.* One of those awesome moments I described in Chapter 10, 'You Live by the Truth.' He paid for it with a month of isolation in solitary confinement, but can you imagine how he and everyone else felt? Free, I'm sure of it. He was triumphant for one liberating moment and he just had to share it with everyone. What a gift he gave them. What a brat he was. You just can't imprison a person's mind unless s/he consents to it. Unfortunately, too many people do give that permission.

Now, guys and gals behind bars, let me talk straight for a minute. As Skippy in an ideal world, I would never choose any action that would limit my freedom because to love myself the most I'd never want to go there. Since we live in a less than ideal world, sometimes we find ourselves there by our choices or the choices of others, acting out of their own right perspective. Grrr.

I hate that, but my point here is that whatever the experience, you are ultimately in control of how *you* handle *you*. Keep your thinking elevated to the stars; keep your

heart and mind soaring with internal music or the flight of birds or the passing of moon and stars -- whatever it takes to keep your imagination free.

I'm going to offer some suggestions here since ceci and I are the ones thinking about this now. Please take them in the spirit they are intended -- food for your mind. Take what you need and leave the rest. You won't hurt my feelings.

While incarcerated, take responsibility and tell the truth about whatever it is that got you where you are. Right any wrongs you can. Make friends with *everyone* in your current situation and be kind. Yes, even to the warden, the guards, the lawyers, the other inmates -- even the threatening ones.

Realize in their way, they are also trying to make the best out of a bad situation. Think about this. They are in there with you -- you are all, in essence, bound together, even if they have the keys or can come and go. What do *you* have to learn from creating this experience? Come from your highest self no matter what.

Think of yourself as a modern-day monk on a spiritual quest being purged of the past. True love is the

only way you can go through the prison experience and come out the other side intact, with any kind of integrity. Even if you never get out, it is still a life to be lived. How you do it is up to you.

Love of self *alone* is enough to begin to access true love. Love expands as it is shared.

Fortunately, it is more than enough. Remember we are *always* in an unconditionally loving, personal relationship with our Creator regardless of where we are and what we've done. That's the whole truth, so help us. It's also real even if we don't believe in it. Our Creator knows the truth and remembers it for us until we are ready to accept it.

Now to those incarcerated skeptics who say, "Thanks for nothing, Skippy, it's not that easy." I agree. That's why I'd never knowingly act in a way that I'd end up in prison. If someone else set me up, as my partners did and put me there, I'd be more than agreeable to everyone and everything to get out fast. It's probably the toughest place on earth to get truly rehabilitated which is another word for *enlightened*. All I'm saying is it can be done, even there. Have or find faith. You are going to need it. There, it doesn't come easily.

Before we finish this chapter, I have something to say to people on the outside. A lot of people's lives have been desperately damaged by the actions of others, no doubt about that. So sorry about that folks and I don't say that lightly. The world can be a brutal place in these days of darkness, moral confusion and turmoil.

I just want you to think consciously about the costs to society of our punishment mentality. It is truly staggering. For the 'average' criminal, does it rehabilitate them to come back to be productive citizens once we have exposed them to greater criminal knowledge? Could there be a better way?

I grant you that there are some people in our society today who need to be locked up as they are probably unreachable or at the very least hard core. There are, for sure, lots more who could genuinely be reached and truly rehabilitated if we approached them spiritually. Again, I am not advocating religious dogma. People need spiritual information like: *Karma means you don't get away with anything, ever.* Life will find a way to reveal and correct your darkest secrets sooner or later.

Why don't we know this? It is in all the great writings. *You reap what you sow*, for example, is the way it's

said in the Bible. *What goes around comes around* is a common phrase. Have you heard any of these? Why don't we trust them? Why don't we truly learn to live by them?

This even happens in jail, for goodness sake. There is an internal code there even now. Those toughest to rehabilitate who prey on children, for example, are the lowest on the ranking scale and may need solitary confinement for their own protection.

So, for people in the jail experience, whichever side of the wall you are on, it has never been written anywhere to my knowledge that forgiveness was easy. It has only been written that forgiveness is essential *for you* in order to heal and evolve. It's in the Lord's Prayer to forgive us our trespasses *as we forgive those* who trespass against us. Sorry. I wasn't around to write the original scriptures. Don't kill the messenger.

One final thought on this topic: as I said, I do not believe in coincidences. I think everything happens for a reason. While it took a while to understand all the aspects of this experience, I think now that ceci and I had to go through this in order to write this chapter. Prison life had not been on our radar for subjects we wanted to explore,

previous to this event. Frankly, I'm surprised how often it has come up while writing this book.

During our time in jail, we discussed this issue in great depth and came up with many of these ideas about crime and punishment. We had been given a greater purpose than merely being inconvenienced or victimized. I much prefer that perspective and can even appreciate it now. I just never want to repeat it.

~

UPDATE from ceci: In the process of editing this book, I was subject to many opinions about Skippy such as he sounds superior, preachy and he talks down to readers. As I said in my update in Chapter 7 '*Beloved Readers*,' Skippy was passionate about his ideas. I realized that strong positions evoke equally intense opposing reactions. I needed to let people have their own experience and feelings. New perspectives offer us choices we previously lacked. Please take what you need and leave the rest.

This opposition was the main reason Skippy was reluctant to come forward at all. I was the one to insist we had knowledge that could benefit many people. Most of this

book is my representation of his ideas and neither of us intend to be overbearing. To be fair, I did warn you.

It's okay. As long as Skippy helps you think about *anything* differently, that's all he wanted to accomplish. Take it from me, Skippy never talked down to anyone. He had too much respect for all people. Powerful people tend to make forceful statements. That's the way it is.

Skippy would be the first to admit that his mind races and soars as if he's riding Jonathan. He knew he needed to be reined in sometimes. Now you have a better idea of what I went through as his wife as well as the loneliness he felt because he could not previously share his ideas.

Don't get fooled by the brat you may hear: focus on the spiritual message. It's meant to be all good. Also, notice the places where you turn off to Skippy's ideas. This may reflect an area where you are resistant to change and growth. I often experienced this and had to look deeper inside myself. The reward is a breakthrough to have another alternative viewpoint offering new choices.

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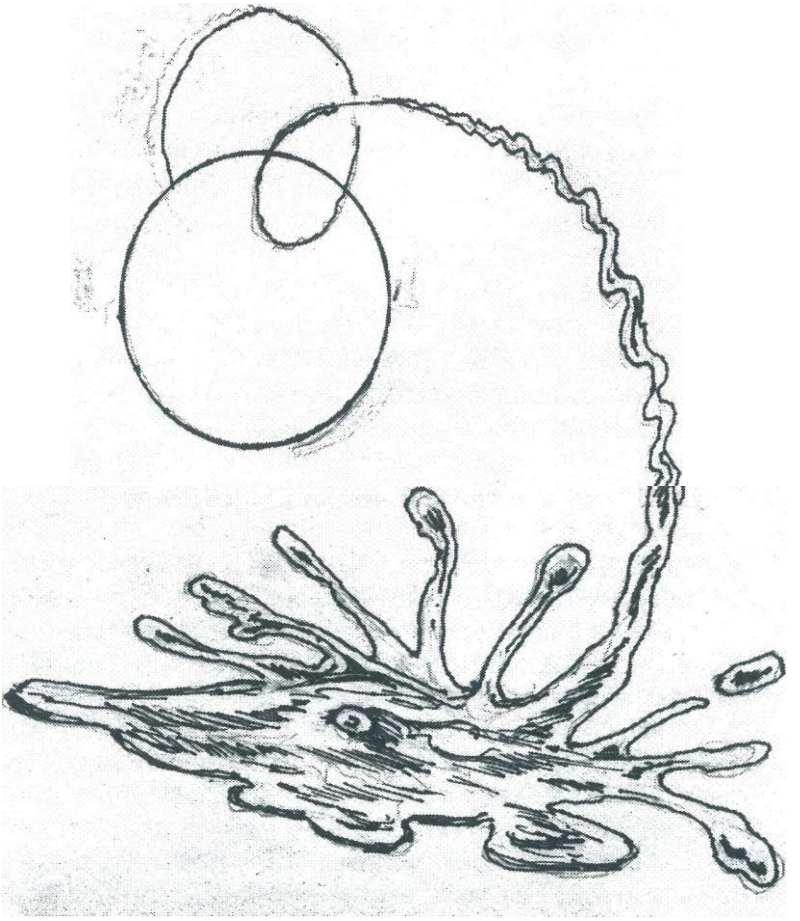
CHAPTER 15

It came from Mars



Let's talk about dogma. Before you run away, hopefully I've found a way to not make it boring. It's important because it is unconscious, suffocating and all-pervasive. We need to raise our awareness of this human trait towards rigidity.

Dogma is just a habit of thought which allows you to behave a certain prescribed way. For example, if your belief system tells you that eating meat on Fridays is bad then you'll eat fish or something else, but never meat. Dogma determines actions such that we no longer have to think for ourselves. More than anything else, people are creatures of habit.

As a therapist, ceci was amazed that when someone sat in a chair in her office once, more often than not, they always sat in the same chair every time they came to see her. If doing something once can create a habit, then what happens to our most cherished beliefs? They become the rules that we cling to until life slams us out of the rigid patterns by presenting us with totally contradictory evidence.

Dogma is like a really, ugly practice that rears its head in business, banking, politics, religion and alas,

academia. For this chapter, I'll focus on academia for a while. I'm into equal distribution of intense scrutiny for all our established institutions.

Academia seems almost like a place in itself, like Camelot. They don't call it the Ivory Tower for nothing. Some professors have elevated themselves to be out of touch with ordinary reality. Academia has become a self-promoting world unto itself where professors demand that you buy their textbook and also, that you believe in their theories. Departmental politics and dogma are the two things that soured me on academia.

My Ivory Tower palace crumbled under the weight of so much bull-crap. I was forced to teach courses that I personally didn't feel qualified to teach and was denied the opportunity to teach courses I knew I was qualified to teach. I had to buy textbooks that were written by nerd-brain losers. I burned out very quickly: I left totally disenchanted.

While there, I didn't have a choice, being relentlessly Skippy. I had to raise my hand to challenge a professor saying, for example, "Dr. So-and-So, if you're saying that all of our descendants crossed the Bering Ice Straits 12,000 years ago, how would you account for the Molche culture in

Chile that's carbon-dated at 35,000 years old? This is a debatable subject in my opinion, but I believe this is correct. Professor: Would you like to restate your theory as being your Best Educated Guess (or BEG for short)?"

You can see by this that I didn't win many popularity contests in academia. That's an understatement actually. In fact, it just seemed pretty damn straight that my academic committee was never going to award my PhD no matter how hard I tried, so I finally graduated PhD without a dissertation. They allowed us to do that in the States. They were going to string that sucker out for another twenty years.

This happened to a good friend of mine who was without a doubt one of the best invertebrate zoologists I've ever known. He taught many a student like me and touched the hearts of most of us. He instilled a sense of *really* seeing that validated a lot of what Skippy already knew. I called him Uncle Marvin. When he finally retired as a major professor, he called a meeting of his dissertation committee who still had not awarded him his dissertation after twenty-seven years. He told them to take it and shove it up their behinds. Uncle Marvin is a hero to me. He always

stuck to his true higher self. Have you had a teacher like this?

But let's get back to dogma. It's payback time. Now I finally get to have my say. So, as life is life and truth is truth, sure enough zoologists are zoologists and botanists are botanists. I know this is not deep, but please hang in here with me for a minute when I can make my point. *It's about slime.*

There is a critter – which, I guess, I must call it -- a critter. I've found it the size of a quarter in peoples' hot tubs and I've found it in Honduras as large as three feet in diameter. It moves like an amoeba. It crawls like a slow-moving tank and ingests carbon-based food through contractile vacuoles, again just like an amoeba. Although it lives a lifestyle like an amoeba, there is a significant difference.

The larger it gets; the more nuclei it needs as they are the brain centers for its machinery. So far, we were describing an animal but now a strange thing happens. It stills and puts up aerial shoots that grow up to a foot - producing a little bulb on top. The whole structure becomes hardened and it maintains this condition for an extended period of time.

Then, POOF, the pod on top of the stalk explodes, sending out spores which are typically in the domain of plants. No wonder botanists claim it for their own field, but zoologists claim likewise. How can something be both an animal and a plant? Usually they are dramatically different.

The dogma clashes; the scientists are thrown and baffled. Now Skippy doesn't have a problem like this. Botanists may call it a Myxomycete and zoologists may call it a Myxomycota; Skippy just calls it a critter and loves it none the less. Slime is slime. It doesn't need a category, but my complaint is why don't you just say it's your Best Educated Guess? Make up a bizarre name like: pl-animal.

To my dismay, my colleagues refused to BEG and they failed to embrace a bigger picture. Some things just don't fit into the theory, like the Molche or this critter, slime. We shouldn't be so rigid. Arrogance is a luxury that only humans have come to rely on. Can you think of a zebra with arrogance? He knows the lion will get him if he lets down his guard. That's a no-brainer, even for an animal.

Since slime does not fit into any of their comfortable niches, biologists (who study life,) zoologists (who study animals) and botanists (who study plants) have concluded that slime might as well have come from Mars. Skippy

always thought the whole argument was stupid. The world doesn't work that way. Plants and animals don't always fit neatly into slots any more than people do. Academia became very frustrating for me and these were some of the questions I would ponder at depth:

- What about this notion of fitting in?
- Is that what dogma lets us do – blend in?
- Do we need banking dogma for bankers to conform and political dogma for politicians to be uniform?
- Do we need grunge dress dogma for teen-agers to be the same?
- Who really needs it the most?
- What is the real reason behind the rigidity and comfort of habits?
- What can be the reward of slotting the over-abundant truth of God's diversity into a small man-made box of arbitrary categories?
- Could it be that being small is a very effective way of staying safe in a scary world?
- Do you know the saying 'better the devil you know?' It means that the familiar and the known

are preferable to the unknown. It seems that we are very threatened by our expansive inner self.

- Where is individuality in all this?

What I really want to get across, *again*, (at the risk of being repetitious and then discounted) is that 'there's a different way to think about everything.' Take stock and value on your own take on life even though other people may try to invalidate you. If it's what you feel, then the truth will reveal itself. Despite time or circumstances, truth does not change.

Let's try a size-shrinking experiment to get out of our comfort zones for a moment. If everybody on the face of this planet were six inches tall instead of six feet, one tomato would feed you for two weeks. One ear of corn would sustain a whole family. This reminds ceci of her favorite childhood book, 'The Borrowers,' a family of little people who lived in a tree-house and used everything human size in their home. For example, they used a thimble for a table. They borrowed the stuff from the normal-sized humans' homes.

Reminds Skippy of Mary Jane and Sniffles who, with a little incantation and magic dust, through the magic words of 'Poof, Poof, Piffles, Make Me Just as Small as

Sniffles,' Mary Jane became the size of the mouse, Sniffles. Together, they went off to solve the world's problems. There's a different way to think about everything. If you get nothing else out of this book, please get that.

An alien looking at the human race would logically conclude that there was some huge danger with thinking for your own self and thinking *big*. The observation that people seem to fight it relentlessly with their habitual behavior would warrant that opinion.

Habits are an unspoken, unacknowledged form of death. They limit and confine our creativity. They keep our minds on lock-down because we are not in the moment responding spontaneously to our environment. They dull our senses such that, if we were zebras at the water-hole, the lions would be over-stuffed from feeding on our limp, over-weight carcasses. Our awareness and subsequent coping abilities are enormously reduced.

Yet it seems almost impossible to break out of the mold of dogmatic thinking and rigid behavior. The current state of the Catholic Church is an example of the panic, chaos and confusion that results from our religious icons crashing to the ground. 'Cardinal Law' (no pun intended,

honest) went out with his tail between his legs and the ugly revelations about sexual abuse of children keep surfacing.

Politically, the 'Trent Lott' scandal (he was strongly against civil rights in the Martin Luther King days) shows the negative backlash you receive when you try to cling to outdated, unpopular dogma. Segregation is no longer politically correct to espouse and so now we behave as if it never was.

Hypocrisy and secrecy are rampant in the demise of a dogma. No one will admit to believing in it once all is said and done unless they can hold up to enormous pressure. Most people don't have the courage of their convictions when it comes to those odds. Lott's position now is that he has evolved: truth is he was probably shamed out of his old ideas by social change.

I believe the only thinking which can endure such rigors is not based in dogma but on knowledge of higher truth. Dogma restricts, but knowledge expands. Knowledge needs no defense. It just is. Something is true or not true at a higher level and that is that. Here are a few things that are true at that plane:

- Authentic power, which is available to you at any time, exists only in the present moment. This means that if you are dulled by habitual rituals, you deny yourself access to this power. You are operating on past not current cues and they will ultimately fail you. Life happens now, not then.
- The power of love that directs the universe is an expanding force. If your life is not ever-expanding, you are operating from habits which will constrict life and deaden your life-force. We are natural beings and natural creatures have to grow in order to thrive. How much do you feel that you have grown lately?
- Our Supreme Creator is infinitely patient, tolerant and compassionate for the frailties of all humans and non-humans. Knowledge of this would enable us to behave accordingly. How patient are you these days? How tolerant are you of others? How do you feel about immigration these days, for example?

These are ideas from a higher perspective which no doubt people steeped in dogma will reject without examination. Mostly, right-wing extremist people are

famous for doing that under the guise of being practical, realistic or critical. They love to play Devil's advocate. Oh, they are self-proclaimed skeptics and seem proud of it. I never could figure that one out. They think that they have a good beat on things, but I have to ponder some other inner truths.

Are you happy? Are you happy deep down inside? Do you even know what deep-down happy feels like? Is your life ever-expanding or is it shrinking from your limited thinking and behavior? Are you governed by ritualistic actions or ideas that keep your world the same safe size it has been for years now?

Do you ever wonder what is missing? Do you remember the famous song that asks, "Is that all there is?" If you don't, it was sung by Peggy Lee in 1969 about recurring disappointments experienced in life events. The expectations that were meant to be produced never materialized.

It seems like a no-brainer to me that unless you answer a resounding *yes* to the above questions, maybe you better not be so fast to claim that you are skeptical of those who can say it. Surely, we all want to be happy.

One of the biggest obstacles to expansive living is the hidden shame that we carry around with us. Did you ever see the movie 'The Mission?'

Having become a Jesuit, Robert DeNiro played a man burdened by shame for all the people he killed in a war. Consequently, to pay penance, he gave himself a punishment of hauling all his slave trading and warrior equipment up the most amazing, arduous falls in South America. It was hard enough for a man to take himself up these waters, let alone with a weight like this. His Jesuit friends cringed at the self-inflicted brutality but allowed him to fulfill this task to cleanse his inner guilt for all the lives he had taken. What only mattered was what he felt was enough torture for his sins.

We want to relieve the burden that is self-imposed by so many of you on yourselves and to this end, we now explore the murky world of shame. This is the tar and feathering that we do internally that makes us vulnerable to dogma, compulsivity and habitual, limiting living. Shame is what denies us our natural gift of spontaneity and inner knowledge. It's time to stop this destructiveness now.

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CHAPTER 16

Shame Slime

Shame is the human emotional equivalent of slime. I only wish it had come from Mars, but alas, it's created right here on earth. It too is like an insidious, creeping, engulfing force that moves over people's lives and consumes every ounce of vitality in its wake.

Ever imagine traveling through a black hole? Once past the event horizon, the black hole sucks you into the singularity. Our Creator alone knows where you end up then. Shame's like that for humans. It traps you like a dinosaur in the L.A County La Brea tar pit, but we probably wouldn't choose to create a dogma about it. The most essential feature for us is its hidden quality. We conceal it especially from ourselves.

The only way out of shame is self-forgiveness. This creates a real problem for victims. Sorry. "Self-forgiveness," they say, "what did I do wrong? Why do I need to forgive myself when I was the one who was attacked? Forgiving my attacker is tough enough to do. Sometimes impossible*. How do you forgive anyway*?"

Victims must take responsibility for whatever they did to contribute to the situation. Perhaps you ignored the red flags of early abuse and stayed too long in a bad

situation. It may not seem like much, but whatever part is yours needs your forgiveness. Rigorous honesty with self is required.

Also, victims need to know that hanging onto anger or resentment for an offender is like being connected to him with a steel cable. Energy flows back and forth along that cable and the victim is poisoned by the negativity coming from the perpetrator. Forgiveness releases your end of the cable such that toxic waves can't reach you any longer. So even if you did nothing to invite this situation, you still have forgiveness work to do by healing emotionally from the trauma.

Bottom line is you must learn to forgive, or you'll die of shame which is the worst way to go. In the movie, 'The Edge,' Anthony Hopkins, playing a character who kept his cool in adversity, stated that anyone lost and dying in the wilderness actually dies of shame. They get desperately consumed with What if and If only scenarios such as: 'What if I'd never done this? What if I'd thought to bring a compass?' or 'If only I had done that, this would never have happened.'

They expend all their life force on these types of regrets and not on thinking their way out to survive. They

are trapped in the past and miss whatever opportunities there are in the present for overcoming the challenge. They literally die of shame.

Self-forgiveness, in this case, could be as follows:

- I accept that I am here today, no matter how I got here and I have to take responsibility for my own life right now.
- I choose to live here and now.
- I am willing to start my life this moment and really claim it.
- I am willing to do whatever it takes to emerge from this tragic situation.
- I choose to heal the pain, thereby releasing my offender to society's laws and God.

With this attitude, I have to let go of my identity as a victim and choose to embrace my power *now*. Forgiveness, which is really present moment living, sets me free. But, first and foremost, it's a choice I make for me right this moment and every moment thereafter.

What do I have to forgive myself for? Again, at the very least, if I die of shame, I'm stuck in the past, not the present moment. This is where I remember and experience

who I am as spirit and where my power is. It takes only one instant to achieve this.

Remember? We talked about this before in Chapter 10, '*You Live by the Truth*.' So, then I am free. I access a power greater than myself who can help me find some physical, mental and emotional ways out of the impossible situation that I find myself in. Or, at the very least, embrace the impossible situation without so much fear. And hopefully accept whatever outcome my higher power chooses for me now with grace. Acceptance, itself, is a mighty tool for self-calming. It may even require facing death without fear.

The how of forgiveness is mental -- you just consciously choose to do it now. The why of forgiveness is for me to be free. What better reason is there? There are some necessary requirements though. For starters, you have to give yourself the freedom to cry or emote to release the past. And probably cry a lot because you need to feel everything. Darn, did we hope to get out of this without *feeling*?

In fact, in my own experience with releasing shame, it makes you want to vomit your insides out when you get in touch with it. The density of this low vibratory force field

is like a barium purgative. It is as heavy as lead and something the body passionately rejects with projectile vomiting to free itself. Shame is nasty stuff. Like peoples' lungs when they smoke too much. (It's such an apt comparison that I couldn't resist, but I don't mean to pick on smokers here -- they get enough grief these days.)

Right away we're going to have a problem helping about fifty percent of the population. *Men*. We've pretty much denied them the right and freedom to feel all their feelings. Really sorry about that, dudes. In Skippy's world, emotion is the key to true vitality and spontaneity. Guys, take it from me, feel free to feel. Don't knock it if you haven't tried it lately. You're not a sissy to me. You're a *real* man. I do it quite a bit, to be honest with you. Who wouldn't these days with social order and sanity being twisted the way it is?

There's a foolproof way to know for sure if you truly have forgiven yourself and others. Have you noticed that life experiences tend to repeat and repeat, normally with some variations on the theme? Like if you've married two alcoholics and your third spouse is a workaholic, your life may be more orderly, but you're just as lonely. Okay, if you've noticed that, I'll tell you a fact. Once you've truly

forgiven, you start having totally new and joyous experiences more often. The old cycle fades away. If you're not deep down happy yet having new adventures, you haven't finished.

This fact used to drive ceci nuts as a therapist until she dropped out. People would come in with multiple life problems, but vehemently insisted they'd finished with their early childhood abuse experiences. Fortunately, she knew that was the signal to tell her they weren't ready yet to *really* let it go completely. Her job then became helping them get prepared for a future healing time. It took a lot of pressure off of her.

They weren't happy yet or they wouldn't be there to see her, but they didn't want to believe it could still involve this early imprint. *Denial* is not just a river in Egypt (i.e. the NILE -- get it?), sometimes it's an innate self-protective mechanism.

Ceci knew this and understood the need to maintain their cocoon while at the same time, trying to introduce some new perspective for them. She just tried to open the door a crack and plant some idea seeds. Down the road awhile, hopefully, they'd allow more to surface.

They didn't know about the tenacity of shame which infiltrates the core of our being and shapes our identity as a bad, worthless, hopeless loser. It is irreversible then. Ask a Vietnam vet, if you don't believe me. Their Post-Traumatic Stress, after coming home, crippled them with guilt and horror for atrocities performed or witnessed. Also, they felt too ashamed to ask for help.

When we truly forgive by claiming this moment to reshape our self-concept as worthy, that is the difference that makes all the difference, so thereafter, it's *different.* If it feels the same, then you're not finished. Sorry. Life can be a bitch sometimes, pretty black and white. Don't blame me. I didn't make the rules.

I've got two more things to say about this and then we'll move on. I know this is tough stuff, but if you're still reading, you can handle it. You're obviously stronger and more ready to be free than you probably think you are. One point is about animals; the other is about intimacy. They are both about living in the present moment.

Let's go back to the zebra at the waterhole. I know I've used this example before, but it bears repeating for us to really get it. He's aware and alert without letting down his guard. He catches a scent of a lion in the tall grass and

bolts as the lion attacks. Outrunning the lion to safety, he returns to the waterhole, alert and ready for survival mode. But he's *over* it. That's the point. The process is alertness, fear spasm, adrenaline rush, resolution and then peace. For animals, that's daily life.

As I said before, if that had been a human, it could take months in therapy to resolve, if ever. Is there anything we can learn from this? Perhaps, that living in this moment, alert, aware, alive and responsive is *natural* and we too are of Nature. Sounds like forgiveness to me. It requires being totally intimate and open to one's innate instincts, namely our feelings – we need to be whole, healed individuals.

Issues that are toughest for us to be intimate and therefore shame-free with ourselves and others about, involve physical/sexual abuse, addictions and grief/loss. The shame of these runs deepest to the core. We have to talk about intimacy more -- which most people immediately equate with sex. Not.

By intimacy, I mean honesty, trust and healthy boundaries physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually: *Unconditional love*, in other words. What does that look like? We come back to being *your Swan-self.*

First of all, let me go back to the 1960's for a moment. For decades, we had all been carrying around a ton of cultural shame slime from world wars, economic depression, civil, sexual and emotional repression etc. Then all those flower children caught a wave of something beautiful which I call the Love Vibration.

But I think it was a case of too much too soon. I suspect, with all the unconscious shame slime at the core of their beings, they directed all that energy to the lowest (no judgment here) level of intimacy which is physical. They got high and got sexually liberated. Now we're inundated with herpes, AIDS and addictions galore. Do you think that this is a coincidence? They weren't bad, just a little dense (meaning blocked) at a vibratory level, that is. Goodness, we have to bless them. They almost got it and many still hold true to those ideals today. Do *you* know any ageing hippies? Are *you* one?

Now it's coming around again and I think we've figured out a few things. Without the shame slime, real intimacy first occurs within my own self. In my own being, I am aware, alert, alive and responsive to life. I am in love with my true self. Consciously, I choose to actualize my best potential and share it with others.

With honesty, trust and appropriate boundaries, I extend love responsibly. I am only sexual if I am spiritually committed to the person because sexuality opens me up to divine energy like nothing else. I need to be around to deal with the vulnerable feelings that get stimulated by both of us as well as to allow true intimacy to grow.

All these teenagers and young adults bored with sex, looking for more thrills with same sex and multiple partners are *not* as free as they'd like to think. Let's cut through all the confusion here. True sexual intimacy can only occur in a long-term, committed relationship where we bare our souls to each other not just our bodies. Sex is inherently spiritual.

And women still get hurt more by this than men because spirit comes through the female more easily. Better to focus on developing your sense of spiritual identity first. Leave the sex for when you've figured that out. Don't give me this crap about recreational sex either. In truth, we really can't handle it.

It just does not hold true for the majority of females. I have it on good authority from the woman in my life that they can't have sex without their emotions being aroused -- *if they are honest with themselves inside*. I didn't make them

this way -- I just accept them as is and work with them to make the most of it.

Basically then, I don't use people. I certainly don't abuse them. Their body is their temple for their highest self and I totally respect that. I just wish females would honor themselves more.

Since statistics state that currently one in four females and one in ten males have been sexually abused in childhood, we'd better get a grip on this physical touch thing. As victims, people can swing from one extreme of rejection of physical touch to being touchy-feely addicts. Where's the truth in this? Where's the love?

The truth is that living things thrive on appropriate, non-sexual, non-threatening physical touch. It is a beautiful loving thing to share bodies when it is right at every level for both beings. This applies to interspecies contact also. Have you ever hurt an animal with your touch?

The truth is: *Be responsible with the power of your touch*. Be aware of the power of your touch. Be a force for healing touch. Don't touch anyone without their permission because you can't assume they're okay with it. It's their

body, after all, not yours. You'd want that respect also, wouldn't you?

RESPECT -- we've gone a long way from that. We have to get back to it. Let your friend decide. Give her room. She may still be in the process of claiming her body and not have strong boundaries. This applies to men too. Have strong boundaries for your partner in the interim. Go slow. Take time to really know someone before you even hug them or hold their hand, let alone share sex.

Get to know what touch means to them *first*. That creates trust. *And trust is the ground zero of intimacy and everything worthwhile in life.* Sorry, but there's no way to build enough trust on one date to even justify sex. I'm sure I'll be labeled a prude after this. I'm not --I just know what's worth having and what's not. I've been there and done that myself enough times to learn the lesson.

Trust me on this. With more wives than I care to admit to, I've married for all the wrong reasons so, one way or another, trust got broken. Way early in the relationship. And we never got it back. Go figure. It's that fragile and that important.

Once broken, it takes a superior human being to overcome broken trust and continue to love unconditionally. And darn it, I have to admit that often women have a better track record at this than most men. Maybe they really are superior human beings and we really shouldn't keep them under the veil, symbolically or otherwise.

As in nature, let's honor the time a person defines as their boundary much like a caterpillar creates a cocoon for the perfect environment to transform into a butterfly. Saying, "This is what I need for now mentally, emotionally, physically or spiritually," releases *my Swan-self* and then we're both free.

I had to drag you through the muck of all this shame slime because, as I said, it sticks to you like glue if you do not have the courage to bring it out of hiding and expose it to the light.

Shame also manifests itself as human evil. It allows people to do things that they otherwise would never do because it shuts off their feelings for others. A sociopath, like the Washington Sniper in October 2002, can lie in wait in a hidden space to strike down an innocent person like an animal because he had no human compassion for his

victims. He felt nothing for them. He just got off on the thrill of the hunt. He was on his own trip. Now that's a blocked individual and look at the havoc he created for the East Coast of New England.

But I'll bet you feel pretty lousy right now, don't you? Well, I promised you I'd show you how to dump all this stuff and not get stuck and to build trust, you need to know. My word is my bond. The good news is the chapter's *over* so prepare to discard some *now.*

Here's how to do it. With a conscious act of heart and will, as well as a thought process, I allow my inner self to bring the feelings of shame and guilt to the surface. Perhaps my conscience has been stimulated by the ideas presented here or by knowing what it is that is unfinished within me. Just wanting to know is sufficient. Willingness is vital to this as spirit cannot usurp our free will.

Then I can hold positive thoughts such as*: I feel the painful twinge of these difficult emotions enough to identify them and I choose with awareness of the highest part of my being to release them without judgment. I accept and rejoice in the power given to me in the present moment to live anew according to my highest values. The past is over and the now is yet unrealized. Everything is possible now.*

The trick is that doing this process without feeling these painful feelings will not complete the healing. Keep moving through the pain. Every single time you connect with these feelings, release them. Gradually they will fade away. This is a process not an event: it can seem like an ongoing marathon. I believe that this too shall pass.

If you like, think of yourself in my beautiful, tranquil hotel in Yelapa and bury it in the sand. Refocus on what's *really real* in the jungle surroundings. The Power of Love and Life one moment at a time is the only enduring force in the universe and it is also the only thing we require to begin anew without shame. I suggest you think about these things at length and let the rest go. Surrender to a Superior force and have faith and hope.

What have you got to lose?

Only the quicksand of shame slime and a burdened, toxic soul.

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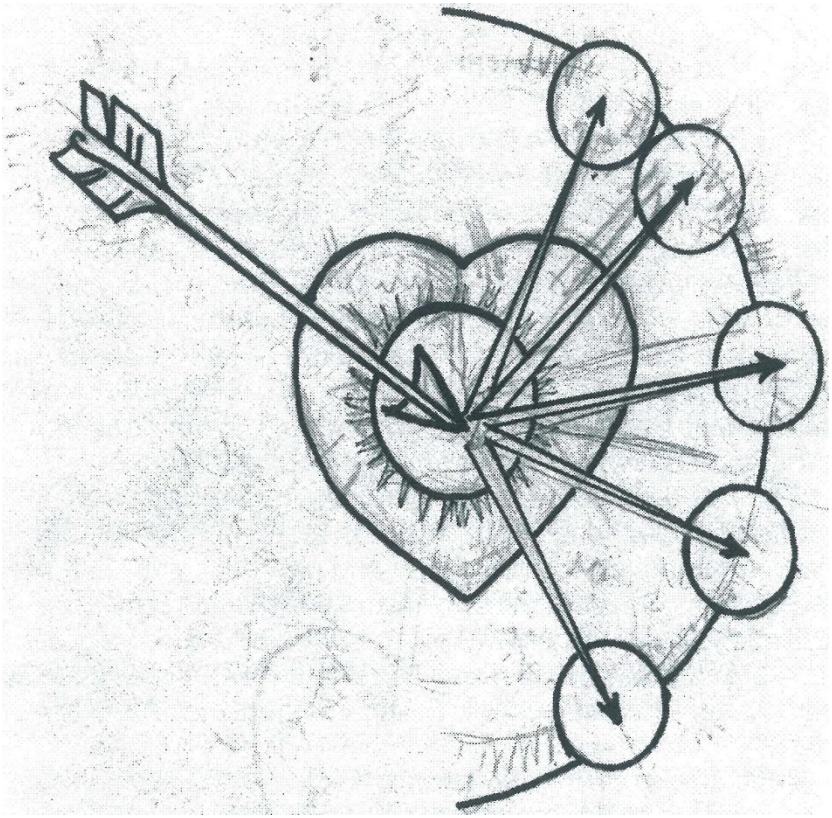
CHAPTER 17

Big, Little, Short or Tall, Our CREATOR knows I've loved them all



This is the chapter where I tell you how I feel about ceci and some more of the things I've learned about women. Some of it, I may have been mentioned before, but my repetition is to emphasize important points. Overall, this is a complex topic and we have to approach it gradually. Women are mysterious even to themselves, so they warrant these several chapters over the course of our journey to explore intimacy. We figure that we owe our readers more of an in-depth knowledge of our relationship to charter the challenges of couple hood more thoroughly.

I feel qualified to address this issue because I have done a lot of research. Women have found me very attractive over the years and I, of course felt the same towards them. But this woman was different, right from the start. Allow me to explain.

A year and a half into meetings with a spiritual group I was attending, I was sitting there one evening listening to the usual stuff being said and I decided that I really hated being there. I'd turned for help to a place, but they couldn't reach me despite their efforts and mine. Sorry, I tried. *Again.* I was just about finished with groupie stuff by then. 'This would be my last meeting,' I decided.

All of a sudden, I got this zinger of a presence from the woman who walked into the room late. I braced myself, fully expecting to behold the woman of my dreams. Nothing less than that could impact me so strongly. I had fantasized so much about her. I knew exactly what she would be like: a five-foot, four-inch, beautiful, voluptuous blonde. I confidently turned towards her. I gazed upon a 6 ft. woman with the brightest face I'd ever seen. She was not short, voluptuous or blonde. I was alarmed, thrown for a loop, but nevertheless stunned and captivated by her smiling face, all at once.

I'm five-foot, seven-inches. This could never work, just for starters. Isn't it truly amazing how when you expect to meet the love of your life, you automatically put up a wall and get really petty? As I mentioned earlier, Seinfeld made a fortune out of this type of superficiality. But there I was. Things rumbled and churned within me and I had to withdraw. Somehow, I had to maintain enough of her interest without getting too involved. What a dilemma. I could not ignore that initial wave that I knew was a significant sign.

I ignored her, sort of, but I gave her enough attention to keep her engaged with me. I was in conflict

within myself and needed time. I had already defensively tuned myself towards a woman of like-mind who wanted nothing more than a superficial, sexual, casual liaison. That was perfect for me, burned out as I was on serious relationships.

With this attitude, I held off any real meaningful commitment with ceci for about two years. Every-time we got together, it felt so good and so right. I melted before her gaze. I turned to mush under her touch. I felt surrounded by a loving glow and peaceful in a way I'd never known with anyone else.

I'm not saying it was easy to put her off. I was just more than a little scared. There comes a time, however, when life itself steps in to wear down your resistance to the truth. Any superficial relationships I'd kept came to an end and my meaningful relationship with ceci became front and center. She redirected my life and my mind. See why I was scared? I sensed that would happen. In fact, it had already happened *before* we officially met with that energetic zinger when she walked in that room.

I had given up the concept that any one female person could handle the adult-size Skippy. It seemed too much to ask of anyone. Imagine a three-year-old baby giant,

like, 'Honey, I Blew up the Kids,' roaming around wreaking havoc on a miniature world. I often felt like that. I was too much for this world. Too many women had made that clear to me in no uncertain terms.

Even then, in the movie, the solution to handling the giant baby was to blow up his Mom until they could both get shrunk. No one came up with the idea of blowing up the world to fit *him.* Expand the others -- leave him alone -- what a concept. That was my life experience in a nut-shell. Shrink to fit in -- I was fed up with it.

Skippy only knows how to give his all at any given time and strives to please people as much as possible. This is a dangerous combination. It is a combination that women know all too well.

My Mom and nanny did wonders with the child Skippy and really deserve credit for keeping him with me throughout my life. But I never found one grown-up female, until ceci, who could deal with the adult-size Skippy. Ceci's capacity to learn to do this has quite literally blown my mind. I'd come to the conclusion loving the many instead of 'The One' was the safe way for me to proceed as a man.

As Spirit continued to call me to ceci relentlessly, I found some comfort in a line from the Grateful Dead that said, 'I need a woman twice my size.' This helped dispel my short, blonde, fantasy-ideal woman, (which was really just my mental resistance against a new and different idea) and brought me into the realm of a *real* woman who magnanimously loved me for me. This was more than compensation for me.

This was a unique feeling because previous loves seemed to love me conditionally for what I could be, in their minds. They always had at least one thing they wanted to change about me, and consequently, this one thing became our downfall. Sorry, but I always automatically rebel against changing anything about me to please anyone but me.

If it is wrong for me and doesn't make me happy, fine but to accommodate anyone else, no thank you. I frankly don't need the approval of other people that much, not even a significant other. Unconditional love is my thing not love with strings. I am more than happy with being me and attracting the wonderful friends that I have in my life without changing a thing. It caused me more agony than I could ever share to realize that so many people had no clue

as to how to love without conditions. Has anyone else been hurt by this?

This woman loved me simply for who I am. She alone truly understood me and I felt safe to begin to share Skippy and Jonathan with her. Amazingly, she embraced them too. Like everyone in love, her heartfelt desire was to see happiness rather than sadness, radiate from my eyes. Her loving presence is what made her seem so big, no matter what her height would have been.

Let me explain it this way. It's like she has a living bubble of joy around her, whether she's aware of it or not and this bubble of joy fills up my presence. She has more energy in a day than I have in a week. Without the focus of this bubble, which is like a guiding light to me, I would move totally into my mind and leave this form completely. Ceci quite literally is my anchor to this planet and with her ability to translate my mind into a communication form, like this book, I can stay here. It is now safe for me to stay here because ceci interfaces the world for me.

It's not that I can't function alone; had times of being apart. It's just that I need her as my reality check to sanity which is the power of the light of life itself. She needs me, for the same reason. I validate her understanding that love

is the driving force behind all life. I also influence her by being an inspiration for her new creativity, as she does for me. I've almost recovered from my dislike of being here on this planet.

The reason that I used to escape this world through alcohol and Jonathan was because the truth of Skippy was so harshly different. Here, I seemed to meet conflict everywhere. Skippy doesn't even do conflict. *In his world, remember, nothing ever goes wrong.* This is such a far cry from this reality where everything seems skewed in favor of opposition most of the time.

I never told anyone about the inner Skippy before. I never told anyone about Jonathan. Now, through ceci, I may end up telling the world. How scary is that? My own son doesn't even know. Or my then wives. Some days I'm so grateful to ceci that I feel like she saved my life. Having just one person to totally relate to seems to be enough to turn it all around. Together ceci and I are meeting more Skippys every day which is exciting in itself.

It's a double-edged sword though.

Other days, I get afraid of the repercussions of this. I want to hide again -- I feel too naked and exposed to

danger. I can't do this again -- be vulnerable like a child, defenseless and too open. I won't do this again. I'll retreat into my brat self and push her away hard, once and for all.

She becomes the perceived threat to my anonymity and my secrets. She becomes the enemy. So, what do you do with the one who won't leave, no matter what? That kind of tenacity is a bitch. Darn, I hate to love it when that happens.

Bottom line is ceci and I met at a time when both of us were gambling on truth and neither of us felt like we had anything to lose. Without the expectation of 'The One,' I was content to get comfort where I could until I was no longer here. It was fine with me to go home to bigger and better things in my mind. I know where I'm going -- *I've never forgotten my real home.* I could afford to test ceci to the max. I concluded that it was much better to stay mostly alone, content with a closed heart than alone again with a shattered one. I was done with broken hearts.

Ceci, on the other hand, was approaching her disconnectedness from a vantage point that it was time for 'The One' or else not being here either. She had no other anchoring connection to the planet keeping her here, despite a loving family and friends. Nothing and no one she

felt needed her to be here. Their busy lives would go on regardless of whether she was here or not.

And she felt a greater calling bringing her to Puerto Vallarta.

Then she met me. Now please don't get the impression I'm a helpless, hopeless twit. I'm just needy in a different way -- a way that ceci alone seems to understand and fulfill. I need something *real -- totally real, honest and true.* It's a need that I was very convinced could never be met or fulfilled.

I really believed that, so it took some time to come around. Ceci convinces me to this day. She even can help others. And helping others is really all that I'm all about. I'd just come to believe that without help myself to anchor to someone real, I could no longer help others or the world. I was that discouraged and disheartened. Hey, we all need validation.

Up until then, I just gave to the world all the time. I think it was a flaw of mine. I would give my last dime to a street person because I always knew there would be more. It always comes to me one way or another, so I'm comfortable with the flow. Giving seems to be a big issue

for many people, especially for women, which is why we are spending time on it here. What is appropriate to give, or not give? When is it most loving to say yes and when is it most loving to say no?

I finally had to admit that I was devoting too much of myself to the many women and men who were attracted to me. Together, ceci and I devised some rules to give by.

The most important guideline that we used is this: Is my intent to control someone else? Now I must really examine my motives here. Genuine giving requires connection without judgement and results in the enhancement of the other person's joy. This creates a spiritual loop that brings unconditional love back to you. Giving and receiving become one continuous circle of love and joy for all concerned. Everyone thrives and feels uplifted.

Giving with conditions and strings attached creates a backlash for the giver and the receiver that leads to resentment. The recipient is not perceived to be grateful and the giver feels used. The only problem here is that the giving was done with the intent to control the person in need and now both parties are resentful. Sooner or later, anyone on the receiving end paying attention to control

issues and valuing their freedom will rebel. Trust me. Mystery stories and psychological thrillers are frequently based on this very premise.

I wonder if this ever happens in the natural animal realm. Let me think. What does giving look like there? Animals like monkeys, chimpanzees and gorillas travel in packs and groom each other freely. Many insects go to their death for the sake of the colony. Ants, for example, in South America lie down and die to make a foundation for the rest of the colony to traverse the river.

A bird will take first, full-force position in the V-formation to break the head-wind for the rest of the group. Birds, butterflies, whales, dolphins, monkeys, chimpanzees, gorillas, lions, elephants, ants, termites, etc., come to mind as creatures that exist co-operatively and protectively, looking out for the welfare of the entire group. More often than not, giving in the world of animals is for the sake of the greater good. Hm-m, time for a thought.

What can we humans learn from this? Why does it seem that non-humans are much more generous with each other with their real selves than humans? Why are they more in tune with the bigger picture than we civilized critters?

Giving doesn't seem to be better misrepresented than with the institutionalization of Christmas. People tend to give from their wallets rather than their own heart-felt generosity. They suffer in huge crowds on the main shopping days before Christmas and then endure even longer crowds on Boxing Day to return items that are meaningless and didn't fit expectations.

The year begins with prescribed ritual, meaningless socially-sanctioned rounds of giving with: birthdays, anniversaries, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Easter, Memorial Day etc. etc. You get the idea. Whatever happened to spontaneous giving from the heart? People need to feel loved and appreciated every day. Dictating a day to express love is counterfeit not genuine giving.

It seems to me that when you give to get back or to control others, the whole value of giving gets lost. Perhaps we need to look at this more carefully in the next chapter. I've named it the Crusader Rabbit Syndrome.

I have my own bubble of joy around me regardless of my circumstances. I exist in my mind, remember. It's not like I need a woman in the traditional sense to complete me. I feel complete within myself already. But with ceci, our bubbles magnify and increase exponentially. People would

call us eccentric and maybe even out there but sooner or later they usually fall in love with us.

~

At the risk of drastically changing the subject here, I want to address a huge scientific issue that has not received much attention and yet affects millions of people but especially women. It is the topic of infertility.

This is a deep-seated, painful beef that I want to express on ceci's behalf and on behalf of all women.

Ceci's generation was the guinea pigs for the Pill and I can't overlook the enormity of all the female problems happening for them. After taking it for several decades, some women were finding it difficult to become pregnant when they stopped it. A wave of infertility crossed North America and couples turned to adoption in foreign countries as one solution. Others tried in-vitro fertilization, enduring expensive procedures and mostly disappointment or multiple births. In addition, some are having a tough time with menopause -- which can last from thirteen to fifteen years.

Are we so arrogant as to believe that we can shut down the complex mechanism known as female biology, for years and years, with a scientific solution and expect there to be no repercussions or consequences from this? Granted not all women who take the Pill have these problems like not all people who smoke get lung cancer.

But there still seems to be such an enormous problem here that I think we need more research. I'm sure there are other factors like food additives, preservatives, stress, etc. but *still* -- this is one area that women seem to have just accepted without question and I know there's more here than meets the eye. Can't we at least explore it? It makes me crazy. People are in agony here.

In all my years of graduate school, it was female physiology (taught by the awesome force called Dr. Dorothy Cox) that was the only course I ever thought I'd fail. It is so-o-o complex -- I'm in awe of it. Men are no big deal after puberty, but women go through puberty, menstruation, pregnancy, post-partum issues, lactation, menopause and all those raging hormones throughout. Good grief, we need to cut them some slack.

That's why I have some strong feelings about this and would really like people to take this much more

seriously. Science is the enemy here, except that as a scientist, I can't condemn it. I just want us to look at this much more carefully and ask more questions.

For example, how many men are struggling with their partners' pain about all this? Or their own pain about it? It affects us, too, guys.

But you know that if men had babies, there would be zero population growth or they would never agree to offer themselves as an entire generation of guinea pigs. Go figure. What's wrong with this picture? That's all I want to say about that. I don't want to create more male shame.

We have enough of that already.

~

CHAPTER 18

Crusader Rabbit Syndrome

If I was to name a new syndrome for the psychiatric manual, DSM-III heralded as the God of Psychiatry, it would be 'the Crusader Rabbit Syndrome.' Please bear with me. It will all make sense soon.

Now, you need some background about this phenomenon and what it means to me, so here it is. When I was a child, I skipped everywhere I went. It seemed like everybody else walked and I didn't want to be like everybody else, so I skipped. See, the rebel (read: brat) from the start. My great uncle watched me skip up and down his rather lengthy driveway which was about a half mile. Skipping seemed twice as fast as walking for the same amount of energy. You just seem to float along. My great uncle called me Skipper because I was a boy who skipped. That quickly got shortened to Skippy and it stuck, which was fine with me.

Skippy meant that I was different. I had lots of favorite activities then, two in particular. Not only was I a kid that floated everywhere I went but if I wasn't skipping, I could be found most often climbing a tree.

Do you know what it's like to know a tree? I mean really *know* a tree -- so you are like *one* with that living

thing. That means you often spend the night in the crotch of the tree where the three big branches merge. You wake up in the morning glad to be alive and grateful to feel the tree because it's a long, long way to the ground, for a small boy.

You pull the p.b.j. (peanut butter and jam) sandwich out of the brown bag that your other mother made and in a short time you're back in tune with the tree. You watch and observe everything about the tree.

It grows bark to protect itself like humans grow skin. It sucks up water from the ground like we'd drink a cola. The tree goes through its yearly cycle of growing leaves, flowers and the awesome fruits. In winter, it drops them all and appears to be dead.

And it has a daily diary all its own. Birds land on its limbs and build their nests. Squirrels do, too. Ants climb the trunk in endless processions. Butterflies and bees come to pollinate it when it flowers. Many varieties of critters gather and enjoy the fruit when in season. You can see far and wide what the tree would see if it had eyes. But it's a rare treat when one little boy comes to sleep in the cradle of its boughs and spend some major time with it. I could feel the tree celebrate that extraordinary event in its life-cycle even then. We all need to be appreciated, even trees.

I've known a lot of trees since then but I'll never forget my first (tree) love.

It was the first place that I learned to look and see up close and personal, until I really saw all the wonders around me.

Years later, after my great aunt and uncle had passed over, there was a company that bought the estate and came with their bulldozers to push down that tree. This was totally unacceptable to Skippy and you can call it tree hugging or whatever, but basically, I convinced them to allow the tree to be as is and see its value. Amazingly, it worked. It is now the icon that brandishes their logo and helped shape their company.

Crusader Rabbit, who could see things from a unique perspective and really deeply care about them, *was birthed in that tree and lives to this day.* But in a world like this, it can become an obsessive preoccupation or hence a syndrome. There is so much saving that needs to be done.

Take Edward Abbey, the fierce environmental writer and activist. Talk about a hero. The man went about saving our little planet that we live on while not hurting anyone physically, just financially. He never killed a living

soul but he killed a lot of financial empires that thought they were above the law. He was a Skippy, a Crusader Rabbit, for sure.

The effort to right all the wrongs of the world is a daunting task and it gets more than a little wearing after a while, but darn, somebody's got to do it.

The syndrome dictates that you are a rebel without a clue. It's like bouncing off all four walls at the same time. People can be so convincing in their victim-hood and there are so many species-threatening issues these days, that it's often hard to tell who's right and who's wrong sometimes. Not every issue is clearly black and white.

You obviously know you're supposed to be headed in some direction as you feel a burning desire to help, but you can hardly find the focus sometimes. Neediness is everywhere and it seems so difficult to grasp where to put your attention at any given moment. Sometimes, if you are aware, listening and paying attention -- it jumps out at you even very early in life. Here's how it happened for me.

Back in the fifties, my parents used to play canasta with some neighbors every Friday. The black and white TV was on in the background and the topic of the day was

whether or not to save the Florida alligators. My father's friend, who was an educated man in a senior management level position, said (and I will never forget this), "why save the alligators? What good are they to mankind?"

This slammed home to me like a bombshell. There was The Problem right in my face and in my space before I was 10 years old. If it was of no benefit to man, then what good was it?

So, wait a minute and let's follow this logic through. With this kind of thinking, you're telling Skippy that he might eventually have to endure life with no rhinos, no hippos, no tigers, no elephants and no alligators. None of them would be beneficial to this man's world either. Goodness only knows what else would go also, if it was up to this guy.

Well, even then, I knew Skippy wouldn't want to live in a world of this mentality. It was then and still is totally unacceptable. Just like the company wanting to push down the tree I slept in as a child. Consequently, environmental, ecological and preservation issues have always been a predominant focus for my Crusader Rabbit energy and I've never quit. Saving the creatures and habitats that are so unique to Earth life seems like a no-brainer to me. But what

an uphill battle it is. There seem to be so many folks who think the way my father's friend did.

What is the bottom line of this phenomenon? What is the syndrome end of this? And where do we begin to repair our mistakes to achieve balance?

It comes back to *Trust* -- yes, I do have more to say about this third aspect of healthy, human relating, after *unconditional love* and *honesty*. It's the toughest part of our functioning and deserves more attention. Trust is *the* monumental issue for our time. Many people have no trust for themselves, each other, our Creator, politicians, the Church or anyone or anything. The fear level around being vulnerable in order to trust is over the top. It seems to be even a virtue to say 'I don't trust anyone.'

How do we tackle this? It turns out that the return to trust comes from within. The foundation for trust comes from honesty (meaning: *TRUTH*) and unconditional love (meaning*: ACCEPTANCE*). They are interconnected and build on each other. Trust is not based on lies or hatred. In the recipe to go spiritually higher, we need *all* three of these vital ingredients.

I must tell my own self the truth about my feelings, thoughts and actions. When I am willing to accept all of my own self, then and only then can ***I trust ME.*** *That is all that is needed. Thanks, God.*

We can rely on ourselves with conviction from this basis and be role models for others. When we do this, we tend to attract more trustworthy people in our lives thereby increasing our self-confidence. Funny how that works.

The resulting higher self-esteem forms the platform for being Crusader Rabbit without the syndrome because you are more effective in selecting the issues to take on. You tend to offer resolution of these issues much more readily because you are a clearer, stronger voice for sanity to which other people respond well. In alignment with your highest self, you just know how to do things right and can communicate that to others. You can reach/teach peace and truth without battling others.

Trust is fundamentally an issue of me within me. That's empowering because it means that I'm not dependent on others for this inner security. I am free and I can truly help others. They become healed and free. Thanks to our Creator for this. We'd never have evolved if we had

to wait for the rest of the world to be trustworthy for us to be released.

I truly do believe that the Creator of my inner world has a plan for each and *every one* of us and *for the planet*. I have maintained an inner knowingness that our bountiful Creator profoundly loves us and the world. Come to think of it -- doesn't it even say this in the Bible?

I don't tend to quote it much for fear of being labeled religiously dogmatic. In the King James Bible, we find it in John 3:16. 'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Doesn't that sound like a loving parent who has a plan for all of us and the world?

Now I happen to think that we have deeply misunderstood both our Creator and His Son. Nevertheless, I believe this sounds like something we need to strive to put our real trust in –- to discover God's plan for each and every one. I think so and I behave accordingly. The Christ (masculine) and the Virgin (feminine) are the voices for our highest truth within as the union of the Creator. We need both to be whole and healthy so that together they blend into *one* harmonious knowingness.

This is why I am so concerned with the intimate communication between male and female, internally and externally. Jesus was the human embodiment of the actualized Christ. He was a brat that we are still trying to figure out. Where is the female counterpart? Under the veil, in more countries than we like to acknowledge, I suspect. The problem is that we need both to be whole and understand the full complexity of our Creator.

It seems that we expect our Creator and His Son to think and behave as humans and there's the crux of the problem from my perspective. Things get worse rather than better this way. Why can't we elevate our thinking more to their level?

Let God be Creator, for goodness sake, Who is allowed to be expansive enough to overcome the good versus evil duality of physical existence. Let's see what happens then. Using higher values such as oneness, equality, freedom and liberty for all, let's reach for a kinder, gentler world to make our own selves proud in the image of our Creator. What would this look like, you may ask? Here are some of my thoughts about it:

- We truly embrace women as equals and stop trying to keep them down.

- We stop expecting females to be copies of males in the workplace, in order to be accepted.
- We don't try to clone humans when we can't feed the six billion mouths on the planet at the moment. We need to face the issue of over-population of the planet and its' resources.
- We don't make it acceptable for females to sexually exploit males the way men have done until now. Men need to have already stopped this behavior. The 1994 movie 'Disclosure' with Demi Moore and Michael Douglas was a great example of this reverse boardroom power dynamic showing that women can be as abusive as men. Let's not even go there.
- We give equal pay for equal work.
- We have excellent daycare for the children of mothers and fathers who have to go out to work.
- We encourage and support men to have the options women do, like stay at home or work part-time in order to be more active in parenting. Couples would have much more freedom in these child-rearing decisions.

- We build in regular dating evenings, with adequate daycare for the love in a marriage to be sustained and nurtured.
- We have mandatory family play nights and regular meals together without technology. People need time to connect which seems to be an elusive quality because our values are all backwards.
- We all have our feminine, intuitive, emotional side as well as our masculine, intellectual, rational side. We are more balanced individuals as deep/sensitive and courageous/strong.
- We accept all our emotions as the way to access higher consciousness and stop being afraid to feel.
- We ride out the discomfort of clearing our shame slime and emerge to a truly loving, kind, gentle capacity for sharing love. Life is messy; let's clean it up.

Now we come to *equality* -- what a concept. Do we really have a clue what that looks and feels like?

When we elevate *our* thinking to the highest level, a lot of issues fall by the wayside and become irrelevant. Life

becomes simpler, less complicated and more orderly. We return to the Garden of Eden on the inside in our hearts and minds, beginning to realign the outside to match. A clarity of focus for Crusader Rabbit emerges:

- Love our whole self, love our neighbors (yes, even the ones next door and all of them on the other side of the planet).
- Clean pollution up and don't create more. Protect the environment, the planet and all its inhabitants.
- Be a voice for TRUTH and SANITY based on inner spiritual values.
- Be a behavioral and attitudinal example of PEACE.
- 'Love the Creator, with all your heart, mind and soul and love your neighbor as YOUR ONE-SELF.' (my own revised non-Biblical quote). We live as one being in this mindset. Then, the syndrome disappears and effective action replaces it – the only way to live as far as I can see since we are all connected.

The unnamed spiritual book I read says that 'to have peace we must teach peace.' *To teach peace we must be*

peace (i.e. be living demonstrations of peaceful thoughts, words and deeds).

This is the example of the Christ, as contained in the human form of Jesus presented to the world. It's said in many ways such as: *as within, so without, The Kingdom of Heaven is within, or 'To thy own self, be true.'* It is our responsibility to have a clear, peaceful internal reality *first.*

Then we need to extend that love out into our homes with our spouses, children, pets and relatives, then into our communities and out into the world. With computers and the Internet today, we have a greater realm of influence than ever before in human history. This is clear from Facebook –- what you put on there can produce dire consequences. Each individual person is responsible for this in their own realm. Accountability was Jesus' misunderstood message, even 2000 years ago. This may not be easy initially, but it becomes more so as inner strength develops in alignment with higher truth.

You can't reach/teach peace through war. Sorry. They are diametrically opposed ideas representing two opposing thought systems of fear and love. We must have recognition of our *One Mind which is all Love.*

Peace is the only thing worth attaining. When are we going to get IT?

~

Let's end this chapter on a lighter note:

A man was deeply burdened by his problems and he cried out to the Lord, "Please take away this pain."

All at once, there was a bright light and a being in glowing robes stood, saying tenderly, "You can enter this hall where you can lay down your load. To keep a balance, on your way out, you must pick up one of your choosing to bring out."

The man quickly agreed and as he was led among the crosses in the hall, he grew more horrified. There were huge ones with bones and flesh still on them. Terrifying long swords and other instruments of destruction lay around, obviously well-used. He rushed to the entrance and picked up the smallest item that was available.

The being in glowing robes greeted him there and asked if that was his final choice?

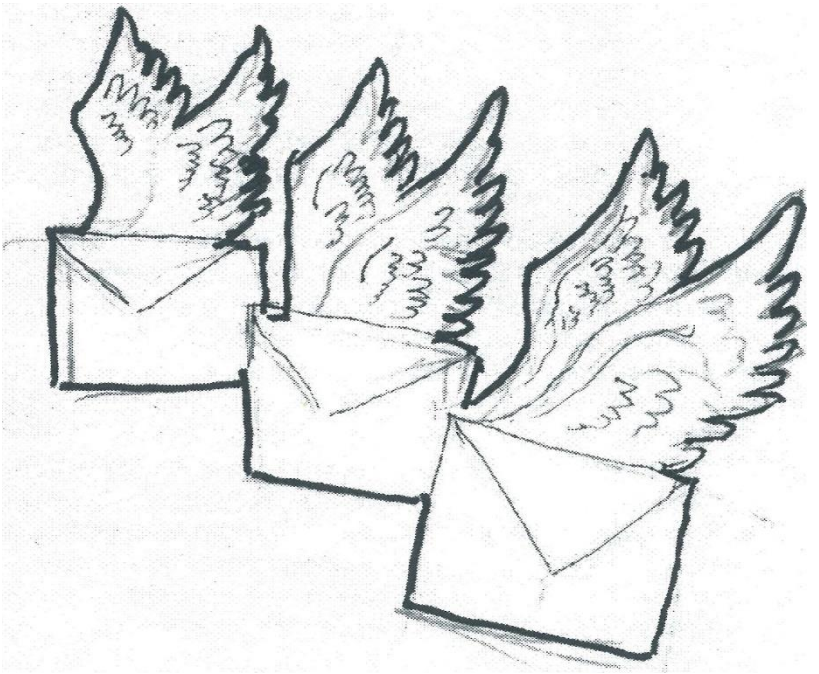
"Yes," stated the man, "This will do nicely."

"It is the one you came in with," said the angel.

~

CHAPTER 19

Letters I'd like to write (mostly) anonymously



DISCLAIMER: My purpose in this chapter is to demonstrate that in the ONE mind (of which we are all a part,) I have a relationship with everyone on the planet.

I can access anyone at any time just by thinking about them and the energy of that does reach them, whether we believe it or not. We are energy after all, in flesh. Obviously, this means there is enormous variety in these relationships in my mind: some are good, others are not because of bad behavior and unenlightened actions. Some are living, but others are not. I accept the reality of this.

I am going to hang my butt in the breeze again to give you a sense of these relationships and to illustrate the connectedness of human thought. There is a responsibility here because thoughts are tangible things (at a readable scientific level). I must be honest, but fair. Criticism must be constructive.

Most of all, I must be forgiving because that's what the Creator in us is all about. People are sensitive and as a rule don't take critical feedback well. To all of those mentioned here, PLEASE DON'T SUE ME. I'm obviously willing to go to jail for my beliefs but more likely I'll hide

deep in the jungle and you'll never find me. Please try *accepting* this in the SPIRIT in which it is intended.

Remember my mottoes are: unconditional love, honesty and trust. Also, realize that while the truth will ultimately set us free, first it can absolutely rock your world. No offense to anyone -- *honest*. No one with a *clear* conscience need fear a letter from me, ever. But you can't hide from me because I can reach you anytime without ever leaving my head. I do tend to call it as I see it. Be forewarned.

I start with a few examples to demonstrate the point with people who are currently on my mind. Some people you may know, others not. Yet, you can still connect to the idea that any mind is accessible to me: whether I get any reply. Spirit has its own way of giving me a message back, so I pay attention to the signs and clues. Nothing is too insignificant. The Universe sends out messages all the time. We need to learn how to tune in more.

Playfully, lovingly, and BLESSED BE!

SKIPPY

~

THE LETTERS

1. The 'Dear Bill Clinton' letter

Yelapa, Mexico

October 8, 2002

Dear Bill,

To be blunt about it, why didn't you screw her brains out? If any office in the land deserves special perks, obviously yours should. I would have never begrudged you screwing a twenty-four-year-old lady. You are both consenting adults.

No slight on her intended because from her perspective, who wouldn't screw Mr. President? JFK got away with it with Marilyn. No one can accuse either one of them of not being American icons. One of my favorite American icons, Bob Dylan would say it this way, "the times they are a-changin." Love that man.

Devilishly,

SKIPPY

~

2. The 'Dear Joe McCarthy' letter

Yelapa, Mexico

October 8, 2002

To Mr. McCarthy,

You did a great good and a great evil for this country. As Chairman of the House on Un-American Activities Committee, you brought to the forefront some of the greatest heroes America will ever know like Woody Guthrie, Pete Seager and many others. You know who they are.

You brought fear to the freedom of speech. But you also ultimately brought a reaffirmation to the Jeffersonian system when your committee was finally done away with.

Screw off and die. Oh, I guess you did that already, Hope your life review went okay.

God rest your soul, wherever it may be,

SKIPPY

~

3. The 'Dear Mr. James Watt' letter

Yelapa, Mexico

October 8, 2002

To Mr. Watt,

You had the credentials of a gnat when President Ronnie Ray-gun appointed you as _____(whatever).

Your job upfront, as defined by your boss, was not to enforce the environmental laws that most sane people worked on enacting for many years. Your job was to dismantle the department from within for which you worked with a vengeance.

Consider yourself partly to blame for the disappearance which means EXTINCTION of about 260 species of plants and animals per year. That's FOREVER, *dude.*

Darn you.
SKIPPY

~

4. The 'Dearest Steven Spielberg' letter

Yelapa, Mexico

October 8, 2002

Dear Steven, (my friend)

If you've read the previous letters, you must have a few pangs of apprehension for this one. STOP. Fear not. I had some things I wanted to get off my chest and out of my head.

Thank you for being a fellow Skippy and an awesome inspiration for excellence in my life. As an entomologist, I recognize to the species the Anax Junes dragonfly that eventually smacked into Nick's van in 'Men in Black.' It's interesting to me to see that you pay so much attention to detail. Absolutely brilliant.

Skippy is the kind of guy to whom detail is one of the more important things in life. Ever noticed how women love it too? Every little aspect in life is important, but you have to stop and look and listen in order to get the messages.

Ceci and I have watched the first 'Men in Black' movie a bazillion times and we still find new stuff. Again, it's brilliant. Please can we do lunch ASAP? I have the perfect critter for your next Aliens movie – a concla. Come see it if you dare.

With highest regard,

(read that - LOVE) *SKIPPY*

~

5. The 'Dear Oprah' letter

Yelapa, Mexico

October 8, 2002

Dearest Oprah,

(my new friend, if I can be so presumptuous – one can always hope)

Oprah, you are an enigma, a woman without a peer. In a world like mine that is people-oriented not color-oriented, you seem perfectly at home. Your commonsense approach reminds me of my other mother nanny, coincidently, also an African-American beautiful soul like you. There are truths that are made for learning and you seem to dish them out in spades.

One great desire of my ceci's heart is to meet you, so here is a personal letter asking for your invitation. She has many gifts of knowingness for you and others to enjoy through this book. It is especially empowering for women but applies to the other species also.

I know ceci would do it in a heartbeat for you. Then I wouldn't have to listen to her talk about the dream every day, only the reality. Makes much better copy and my life

would be much more peaceful. Well, maybe not, but I'm HER biggest fan and I want all her dreams to come true

Ceci is probably one of your greatest fans and a potential girlfriend. November 22nd would be our best day if it works for you. It is St. Cecilia Day in Mexico -- a power day for ceci. Her belly-button birthday is September 12th, now the official day of Mourning and Unity and while unity is our highest intention, we don't like to associate it with mourning. So that wouldn't be her choice of days to actualize this long-standing dream. While I don't like to beg, in this case, I'll make an exception.

I know that you pay attention to the significance of stuff like that. Reading the signs that lead a person to his/her destiny is one of the main aims of our next book called 'Hanging Your Butt in the Breeze.' You'll love that one.

Most Respectfully,

SKIPPY

~

6. The 'Dear Al Gore' letter

Yelapa, Mexico

October 8, 2002

Dear Sir,

Although I voted for you by absentee ballot from Mexico (not an easy feat, I might add,) I knew that it would fall on shallow ground once it reached the only bastion of democratic stronghold in my original state of Oklahoma. Out of 76 counties there, only one votes Democratic. I believe sincerely in your stand on the environment and your clear message to the world about global warming.

On the other hand, on September 11th, 2001, I'll bet you're really glad you weren't President. We'll see if Dick Cheney and Colin Powell can pull this iron out of the fire. But I'm frankly glad that you as the kinder, gentler giant don't have to deal with this mess.

We can certainly understand why you decided not to set yourself up in the next election. However, know this, I 'm on your team any day.

In high regard,

SKIPPY

~

7. The 'Dear Lukey' letters

August 2018

UPDATE FROM SKIPPY TO LUKEY:

I forgive you for all that passed between us. Skippy doesn't hold resentments. I forgive myself too. Let's close that dark chapter now: water under the bridge.

I am so pleased to see that you are still at the hotel. I knew you could do it. Ceci plans to come every year for a couple of days at the anniversary of my physical passing. I need to see it through ceci's eyes. Please treat her well, protect her from anyone still holding a grudge and make her happy with selling our books. She should not be blamed for my mistakes, but forgiven for her own. We all played a part in the problem and need to extend compassion to each other.

With affection still,

SKIPPY (aka Jack Peyton Dyer)

~

8. The Dear 'Jimmy Buffett' letter

Yelapa, Mexico

October 8, 2002

Dear Jimmy,

Please excuse my familiarity here, but I feel like we are brothers in Skippy. There is no greater hero in my musical world than you. Well, Jerry Garcia may be close and John Denver, but they are both dead now. You have staying power and I greatly admire that.

I must have spent a fortune on your CDs over the years because they seem to grow legs and walk away. I always have to have them.

'Beach House on the Moon' has just about worn thin already. It reminds me so much of my father. And I totally relate to 'Semi-True Story.' In fact, I have a bunch of stories that flow very well from your inspired songs. I know 'Pacing the Cage' extremely well from within and without. I have quite the yarn for that tune.

'Changes in Attitudes, Changes in Latitudes' pretty much sums up my life as does 'Margaritaville.' And 'Barometer Soup' is the best of the best.

I would love to collaborate with you on some ideas I have, generated by your songs. I am very accessible these

days through email and would write you back immediately. Ceci and I feel that there are many, many Skippys who are struggling and we need all the help we can to reach them. Please help us help them.

You are my hero, dude. A highlight of my life would be to spend some time with you.

Let's do lunch and talk! Or at least, email.

With highest respect, deeply felt,
SKIPPY

~

9. The official 'Oh-Dear Osama Bin Laden' letter

Yelapa, Mexico

October 8, 2002

Oh-dear Osama, (wherever you are)

In your ill-informed way, thank you for uniting the world. Although it was kind of a brutal way to do it, America historically has never been slapped awake like a newborn, until there's a Pearl Harbor, polio, AIDs, etc. A crisis seems to get its attention. Although you may ultimately pay the price

with your life, most everyone else will pay the price with a changed attitude. People in New York City are making eye contact on the street and saying, "How are you doing?" This was totally unheard of before your intervention. Sad but true.

Ultimately the Jeffersonian concept of life, liberty and equality will reign true. I really wish you felt the same.

Let's not wage war in God's name. Let's find a kinder, gentler solution. There's only one God for all of us and our Divine Creator is Love.

By the way, if you are right to think that you can destroy and kill in our Creator's name, why are you hiding (in a cave)? Don't you have courage of your convictions and your faith to openly represent them? And if you escaped, did you have to go 'under the veil' to do it? Kind of ironic, don't you think?

Sadly,

SKIPPY

~

10. The 'To the Head Cheese' letter

Yelapa, Mexico

October 8, 2002

Dear George W.W.W.com,

Couldn't you really use some divine guidance right about now?

Mine and Barbra Streisand's take on you was just about the same. You stole the election and you know it. How does that feel? Could September 11th be your Karma? Maybe you should have tried harder to be Commissioner of Baseball.

It is your credo to never lose at golf or tennis or even the Presidency. Life is only a game to you, so enjoy the game, dude. When you win without learning, your winning means nothing.

If you had become Commissioner of Baseball (what you really wanted to do when you grew up), you could preside over athletically inclined people. They make far more money annually than our best physical scientists, botanists, biologists, astrophysicists, teachers, etc. who are responsible for teaching our country's children. Shame on us for this. Where are our values these days? It's really too bad you had to take your second-best career choice as President.

The whole system sucks but you buy into it BIGTIME. I see you as part of the problem not part of the solution.

Don't give me grief for practicing my Constitutional Right to Freedom of Speech. It's one of the things that makes America great. Isn't that what you want?

SKIPPY

~

11. The 'Dear El Presidente de México, Vincente Fox' letter

Yelapa, México
October 8, 2002

Dear Sir,

There are a lot of things you've done right so far. Congratulations. I too believe Mexico, like Canada, could be a kinder, gentler, moderating and mediating force for the world. Mexico knows how to do business with heart.

I've been coming to your country for the last 20 years and have traveled throughout extensively. I've done the Ruta Maya and have lived here as a permanent resident for the last seven years. I finally got my FM2, which makes me an

immigrant almost Mexican, except that I can't vote (and don't feel a need to). I put my life savings into a little hotel south of Puerto Vallarta and therefore have a vested interest. I normally employ about forty people in high season which feeds about three hundred mouths. Of this, I am very proud. I REALLY care what happens to this place because I love the people as well as the place. It's home to me.

I thoroughly agree with your open border policy, as I never thought much of borders anywhere or anyone's right to draw a line in the sand. A long time ago, the US stole Texas, New Mexico, California, Arizona and Oregon from Mexico. They may have won the battle then, but Mexican immigrants are gradually winning the war now. It just took a while. There are a few more battles to be fought, but please continue to make it easier for those of us who love Mexico to move here. Just don't let foreigners get the upper hand.

I need to draw your attention to an important issue. On the south side of the Bahia de Banderas, there is a peninsula called Cabo Corrientes. Despite years of habitation and logging, the place is still pretty pristine. It supports a population of jaguars (who are almost extinct in Mexico now), mountain lions, coatimundis, pygmy opossums,

military macaws, elephant beetles and numerous other animal and plant species.

The place deserves national status as a sustainable development biotope or a national park -- but to save it, it must be done muy pronto (or immediately if possible.) I believe you are the man with the heart for nature who could accomplish this in enough time.

In return, I offer you this tip. I really think what could put Mexico in the world arena more than anything else is fiber-optics. The present system is too slow and too costly to download information from the Internet. You're the guy that could do something about this too. I have a huge amount of faith in you. Please don't tell anyone I said this because this could get me in big trouble as Telmex and Pemex are the largest monopolies here. Sorry, guys. Just trying to help Mexico get ahead.

I will remain anonymously yours,
SKIPPY

P.S. One last thing while I have you online, so to speak. This Napoleonic law thing you have down here really sucks. You're guilty until you prove yourself innocent which twice now in civil suits, I NEVER EVEN GOT A CHANCE TO DO. It's

like the first one who strikes is the winner and that's not right. It seems an evil person could trump up charges on people all day long, forge a bunch of signatures, get a lawyer to take the case on and get away with it.

Let me emphasize that the police at the El Tuito station, especially the Comandante, are some of Mexico's finest. Thank you for treating us so well guys -- during the screwing we got by the gringos.

P.P.S. When you introduce electricity into new rural areas like our town this past year, please educate the people FIRST on how to use it (so they won't electrocute themselves) and on how to install it without butchering our ancient trees. We lost so many loves (trees, that is) of mine, but the people here had a year-long Christmas bringing in fans, TVs, computers, refrigerators etc. for the first time in their lives.

Those are a couple of personal complaints. Sorry, but I thought you needed to know.

In my heart, I hold you in highest regard,
SKIPPY

~

UPDATE from ceci:

CANADA 2018

*DEAR **SKIPPY** JACK DYER,*

HOW CAN I MISS YOU WHEN YOU NEVER GO AWAY?

With Eternal Devotion,

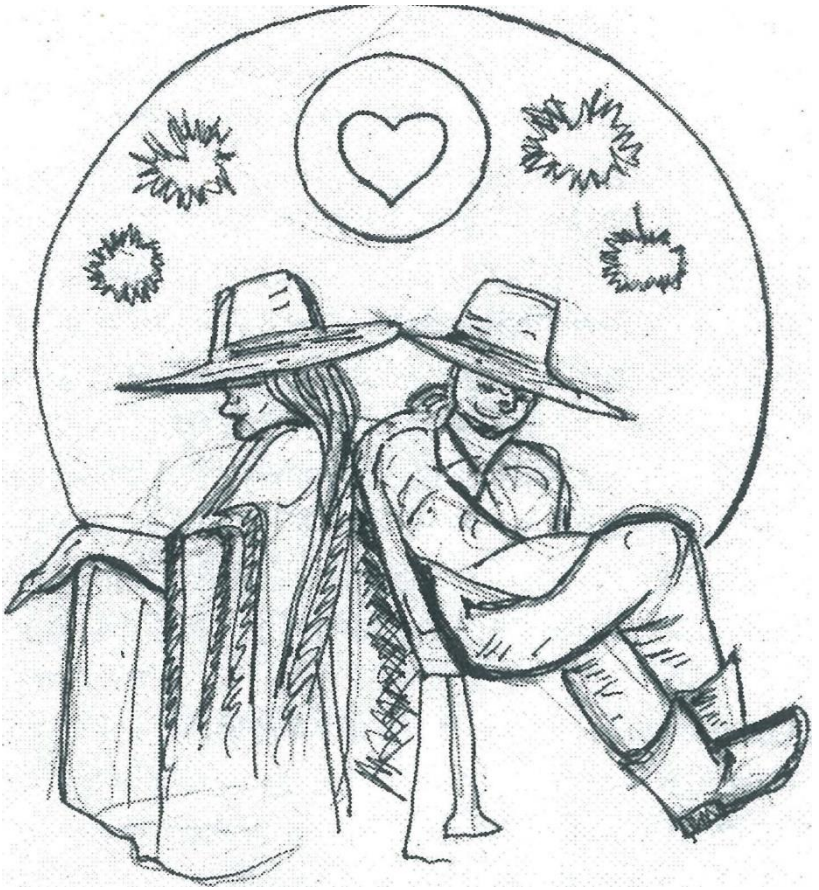
CECI** L. DYER **§

(§ is my symbol for Swan-self)

~

CHAPTER 20

Who is Skippy? and you have to end a book sometime!



Yet another disclaimer: I need to address the question of anonymity up front in Book 1 because it seems to be more of an issue as we share this with others.

I am going to great lengths to be somewhat hidden here for several reasons. You'll come to trust that I don't do *anything* without a good reason, even if you don't like what I do. Sorry -- sort of.

I'm a dreamer, a thinker and an absolute empath. As a sensitive clairsentient, I *feel* the world and am deeply affected by everything. *And what you feel is real*. I just don't choose to deal with my feelings in a public way, as I know this is going to require. I'm co-authoring this with ceci as we share the same mind (she's a Skippy, too, you see), and am sending *her* out to deal with the world. She's fearless despite what some people think and I totally trust her to handle whatever exposure this gets. She won't be alone. I am always with her and she knows it. She can access me anytime, anywhere in her mind.

Plus, friends of Skippy support her with the awesome family network she has and many more friends she hasn't met yet that she'll resonate with along the way. She's up for the adventure. I've never seen her so excited,

actually and she has so much energy now. That makes my heart soar. I'll just stand aside, observe and cheer her on as her biggest fan. Getting the message out there is all that truly matters to both of us.

If you related to this book and laughed or cried throughout, then the answer to the question, *'Who is Skippy?' is YOU ARE*. You are connecting at last to the child within you who is not very happy about being forgotten so long. Start with privately using your childhood nickname. It is time to make friends with this very important part of your life. Too many people have forgotten how, sadly.

I choose to keep my face mostly hidden, so that you can connect to the Skippiness in *you* and only see your *real* self, not me. Can't think of a better reason than that. It seems to me that there are enough man-made icons to focus on without making more, and I haven't seen them help people much. You are the best you that you can ever be deep inside, if you believe in your own self.

Being Skippy means sometimes you have to take risks and be truly defenseless. In fact, we've decided that's the title for the next book, "*Hanging Your Butt in the Breeze*." It's about vulnerability and death. Opening up to the new sucks, but it is the only way to *grow.*

It would be awesome to ask any butterfly how they felt in the cocoon. I imagine that there were moments of sheer terror changing from a caterpillar to a butterfly. I know that is true for humans as they break out of a limiting mold and go forth with newly expanded options. Hopefully this can serve as a guide-book. But please don't blame me. I only follow the natural rules; I didn't make them up.

In my way of thinking, our Creator made a natural order of things. I think it's vitally important to remember this. Something set life in motion and let it go to do its own thing. We were both created and we evolve. Technology shows us this best. One hundred small years ago, there were no telephones, televisions, refrigerators, electricity, airplanes or microwaves. We evolved into them to meet new demands for living. Why is it so hard to embrace both concepts? Our Creator doesn't have that problem. We were both created and we evolve. Only humans are satisfied with one or the other.

That does not mean this Presence abandoned us or doesn't care about us or is uninvolved with us. Our Creator is as far away as a thought. We are the ones who have strayed from our true home with our Maker. Our Creator made us from the only thing He could -- ABUNDANT LOVE -

- as One with the image of the Creator which is a loving mind. Can a loving parent ever forget a child? However, we were given free will that is totally honored so we are able to go our own way -- up to a point.

Let's not forget who is in charge here. If we pay attention, we can see all the ways our Creator tries to help us reach our divine inheritance as *the only* child, in *oneness*. The Creator is constantly trying to get *our* attention. Think about what oneness means for a moment: *ONE WORLD IN PEACE, INDIVISIBLE, UNITY and HARMONY*. How close are we to all that? Our Creator is relentlessly trying to reach us and let us know we are not alone, but we are in danger from our own selves.

Our Creator has gotten the worst rap of all and I, for one, am trying to set the record straight. Quit blaming our beloved Creator for problems we make as we were gifted in divine image as co-creators. We are souls with a physical form not bodies with a soul. Our essence is spiritual and our decisions about our destinies have consequences.

Yes, I have more to say about evolution (remember our Creator doesn't only do one side of an equation, but both at once -- The Divine Presence is that kind of good). Every living creature on earth has to justify its own

existence or return to formlessness. We have labeled this extinction out of fear -- but the awesomely all-powerful Mind of our Creator contains them for eternity out of loving thought because nothing, being energy, ever dies.

In fact, only 1% of the animals that have ever lived still exist. That tells you how tough it is in the wilderness. But our Creator has no problem with us playing around in form and will constantly supply the physical third dimension, if we choose to keep having the adventure. The journey of the life lesson is awesome. We discover the equal relationship we have with God as co-creators. But because our Creator made us, we didn't make the divine condition we are not totally equal.

Secretly, though, I suspect our Beloved Creator actually loves these paradoxes and plays with us in our puffed-up semi-creator relationship with Him to allow us to test our strength and commitment. The purpose of life is to fall in true love with *DIVINE LOVE* again and again, and again. And since our Creator lives outside of time, there is infinite patience and unconditional love.

We have not done anything sinful except hold a wrong idea about all this. The physical plane is a very difficult place to remember your divinity which is why we

try so hard to master it. Our loving Creator is not mad at us so quit being so afraid. Pay attention closely and notice all the *NEW* ways Spirit is trying to correct that idea and with our free will, help us to change our own mind. Remember everything we do to advance civilization lovingly also helps our Creator enjoy the physical, human world more.

If you were to write a book about the existence of life on this planet, the history of human beings would represent the last period of the last page of the book. My point is that human beings have no right to be so smug or snug in their niche because it could all disappear in a heartbeat.

The good news is that (and this bears repeating) there's a Higher Place to go to (with or without physical form), which I choose to call Oneness, as in One Mind. This is where only the highest values exist and they are REAL, free and attainable. This is where we all get together for the good of all creatures (human and otherwise) and become united in Christ/Virgin equal consciousness. Personally, you get there when you take responsibility for your own individuality and respond to the question 'Who is Skippy?' with the answer 'I AM.'

~

Now I'll get on with ending this book.

YOU HAVE TO END A BOOK SOMETIME!

Final thoughts –- a letter to ceci to thank her for her work on this. It wouldn't exist without her, but then it wouldn't exist without me, either. Go figure. What a team. None of it would exist without you, dear readers. Thank you for that. What perfect synchronicity.

~

Canada 2018

My Darling ceci,

I am saving the best for last. You are my life. You allow me to experience the world through you without a physical form. Look forward to lots of fun. Remember this card I gave you:

TODO MI AMOR

TODA MI VIDA

. . . CON TODO MI CORAZON

FELIZ DIA de SAN VALENTIN

(This blessing is meant for every day,

not just February 14th)

Yours Eternally,

SKIPPY

XOXOX

~

SKIPPY'S VISION FOR CECI:

- *You are always aware of my presence.*
- *We are successful in all our endeavors.*
- *You are financially secure and live in abundance.*
- *You allow Casa Skippy to manifest (remember our dream).*
- *Joy is your guiding principle.*
- *You spend at least six months each year in Puerto Vallarta and Yelapa.*
- *And whatever else your heart desires.*

Your forever love,

SKIPPY

~

Dear Beloved readers,

This book really should have come with a warning label. It can't help but offend somebody. The reason for this is reading it may be hazardous to your thinking.

One day, I looked up some writing rules for fun.

- Rule number 1 of the 17 best writer's tips is never save your best for the last. Put the best first, it says. Well, I intended to debunk some rules and I hope that I put my best out all the way through as well as at the last. That's for you to decide, I guess. I'm happy with it. I wanted you to be able to open up to any page and find a gem there for guidance.
- Rule 17 is that there are no rules for good writing. I like that one.
- Rule 7 is that rules may contradict. Even better. So much for rules. Consider them debunked.

Seems a lot like how the world gets screwed up to me. Dogma, again. Time for a new approach.

~

Since this is my mind you are accessing, there is no beginning, middle or end. Like putting your foot in a river you never put it in the same river twice. It is always changing yet always the same. I will always be relentlessly Skippy at some fundamental level while continuing to evolve.

I think we need to review a few things in this closing chapter. My biggest problem is figuring out when to quit writing because I seem to have so much to say all of a sudden. Call it finding my voice if you like. This is compounded by the fact that the love of my life, ceci, is also writing this so she adds some stuff without me knowing. But we are a team so it's okay.

Once again, I always have been and always will be Relentlessly Skippy. That means I do my own thinking even if it's unpopular. I have my own opinions which tend to be somewhat radical. And I'm not afraid to tackle some thorny, tough issues like life, death, happiness, our Creator, religion, critters, politics, and of course, women and virgins.

This is an example of the writing complication I mentioned above in that ceci, being a Virgo, has become increasingly preoccupied with virgins since moving to Mexico, so now I find that I am too. After completing this book, I've come to understand why and how important it is to include them. This is essential, in fact, if we are ever to attain equality between the sexes.

I'm making a study of females (but not in the way you think) and I hope to reveal some of their secrets, as we continue to discover our books. That's why I think this needs a warning label. It won't cause cancer or do injury to your unborn fetus. But it is dangerous nonetheless to enter the strange yet awesome world of Skippy. It's a world where everything goes right. Imagine for a moment. Are you ready for that? Could you accept this?

What is my secret? I make life happen with my choices. Greater spiritual growth is what I desire to experience next. I choose the knowledge of the best of the best. I know who I am and how to access my real power -- co-creator with the power that has ALL POWER. Excuse me -- how can I go wrong with this player (God) on my team? So be it. And I've been teaching you how to do it too -- sharing

REAL LOVE is all that the Divine One is about, despite your old ideas based on fear.

Oprah says God always has a bigger plan for her than she has for herself, so she gets still to open up to it. Some of you may think me outrageously bold for a first-time author. Let me suggest that you consider how any creative, artistic geniuses of our era got where they are such as: Oprah, Madonna, Cher, The Rolling Stones or Steven Spielberg.

Do you think they started out thinking BIG or thinking small? Do you think they were flexible enough to go with the flow and adjust their sights accordingly as things slowly progressed? Did they get blocked by the nay-sayers who claimed it was impossible? NOT.

I rest my case. I don't know where they get their strength from to actualize their dreams, but I've been telling you all along where my source of strength comes from. Since it's my book and my mind (although I share both with ceci intimately), you get to come with us.

There is one thing that I have learned from doing this book that I would like to share with you. I've decided this letter format is the way to go for some things. My earlier letter to my Beloved Readers inspired me. It gives me a way

to say some things directly to where they belong, to the people themselves wherever in life they are, as I hear the call from within. Don't think I'm only aiming at famous celebrities either dead or alive.

I insist on ending this book on a high note. Reflect back to the true story when ceci hit the ground as the silverback gorilla sailed over her back. That was a transcendent experience for her that we can all learn by, just imagining it. We feel the power of Nature and the transformative quality of the instant. We sense its long-lasting impact on her. It was clear her spirit grew and expanded.

In conclusion, I would want you all to have some type of life-altering experience to heighten present-moment living. We are defined by our choices and they do impact others.

Please personally understand how much I love you. Keep looking at the stars, smile inside and live your BEST life. God is good and so are you. ACCEPTANCE of all our free spiritual gifts is the key. You can't go wrong with that.

Eternal Blessings,

SKIPPY

XOXOX

Hanging Your Butt in the Breeze

Ceci L. Dyer

CHAPTER 1

SLEEPING WITH BULLS

On February 17 2004, my husband, Jack, died of complications from a botched hip replacement (the original surgery had left no protective cushioning between the metal and the bone). He had fallen the night of February 13th hitting his head against our concrete wall. I woke on Valentine's Day to see his side of the bed stained with blood. For three days, I begged him to go to the hospital, but he refused. He had consented to a new implant which was still three weeks away. On the 16th, he collapsed and I took him to the hospital where the surgery was to be done.

I saw Jack early the next morning when I came to pay the hospital account. With an oxygen mask over his face, he couldn't talk. I explained that the doctor agreed to do the surgery early, as soon as he was detoxed and stable. Our new life was about to start. All Jack was able to say was "ceci" so I knew he heard me and I promised to return later after a nap. I'd been up all night.

I woke to a knock on my front door and the phone was ringing. It was 5:00 p.m. I opened the door to my landlady who said, “You must call the hospital.” (She had helped me get Jack to the hospital the night before and must have left her number as an emergency contact.) I picked up the phone, not knowing what to expect. I was shaking like a leaf, but I was still completely unprepared for what came next.

It was a friend of Jack’s son (I don’t know to this day how he got the information as it was a new doctor and a different hospital than Jack had gone to before). I listened as he listed a litany of troubles plaguing Jack (I still don’t remember what he said). “Oh, wait a moment,” (long pause), “oh, Jack’s dead.” THAT I remember.

“WHATTTTTTTT?” I screamed. “He died just now when I was on the phone?” “Yes” was all he said. (Only much later did I realize this was a gift. I wouldn’t have wanted to be there physically, but in spirit I was.)

“I’ll be right there,” I replied.

At the hospital, I was led into a room where Jack lay with a sheet over him. I pulled the sheet back and was horrified to see that they had taped his eyes -- his beautiful

eyes -- shut. I pulled off the tape and opened them while I was kissing and holding him. He was still warm, having only passed away about a half hour earlier. In my mind, I cried out, 'Why now, Jack, when everything was about to be fixed? Why, why, WHY?'

'Because no one would ever see you' was the reply I got in my head. I was so shocked that I immediately recoiled, falling onto the other bed in the room and looked at Jack. I hadn't really expected any response, but thinking about it later, if he was able to communicate with me, I thought he'd say something like 'It was my time' or 'It was my destiny.'

Not because NO ONE WOULD EVER SEE ME! It had been as loud and clear as if he had been standing right beside me. It shocks me to this day when I think of it. I wasn't thinking of me. I was engulfed in a wash of despair for *him.* But it was true I had always been content to be in his shadow. I never felt more alone.

Hanging Your Butt in the Breeze is about the ten deaths that took place that year and the vulnerability I felt. In a cathartic release, I wrote the text in six notebooks one week in 2005 when I was 52, living with my parents in Canada, having been medically returned due to my near-

death status. I had severe liver damage and was emotionally destroyed. My conflict with my mother was constant then. Mom's father had died of severe chronic alcoholism and I am sure that was the main reason she despised Jack and me as a couple. She thought he was a terrible influence on me and was glad he was out of my life. Even after death, she had nothing good to say about him, but to the contrary, she hated even the mention of his name. This left me bitter, resentful and bottling up more anger all the time.

I had almost succeeded in going where I thought my beloved Jack had gone, but was cheated of the final outcome. I didn't recognize then that I did want to live. I just didn't know how. I had been the one to reach out for help at the last moment. Doctors, my mother, my sisters and the Canadian Consulate had done wonders to make the return to Canada happen. I was not grateful then. I was terrified, lost and felt alone. I did not respond well to the 'tough love,' but had no other options.

At the time of this writing, twelve long years have passed since I produced *Hanging Your Butt in the Breeze* and there is much that has transpired. A significant episode stands out as a turning point which is when I ran to Mexico

and ended up sleeping with the bulls. After the breakdown episode that I am about to share, the notebooks went missing for those twelve years and I never expected to see them again. My family had packed all my belongings into boxes when I took off on this spiritual quest so I lost track of them.

I traveled extensively for years with no permanent address. Out of the blue, my youngest sister had a box for me. All the notebooks were returned to me. As I read, I realized that I would not have been able to write them again. There was too much that I had forgotten or been compelled to repress and bury.

Yet, I realized that they rang as true today as they did when I wrote them. Now what was missing was what came next: the 12 years of searching, seeking, trying, failing and finally succeeding. Trying to build a life from scraps. Years later, thriving at long last.

In 2006, a year had passed since I'd written the notebooks. My health was better and I was no longer at death's door. My mental and emotional states, however, were grim and I didn't know what to do with myself. Restless as I was, I was still not focused enough to work.

Being a therapist, I turned to a grief counselling group and was berated by my mother for doing so.

"What do you want that for?" she demanded. (It was ironic as she was desperate for me to get out with others.)

"I need to talk about what happened and heal." I replied.

She would have none of it. Jack's name was mud in her home. There was not even any respect for the dead with her. She didn't seem to get that he would never be out of my heart and mind. She issued an ultimatum: “You have a year to sort yourself out because we are selling the house and moving to Kitchener.”

I was stunned. Something inside that was trying to heal broke yet again even deeper this time. Her words felt cruel and I was both smothered and intimidated.

We started having daily struggles. The house grew more tense. Our intentions were diametrically opposed: I wanted to maintain my love and memory of Jack with all the good things we had shared together. Perhaps protectively, she hoped she could get me to forget and move on. My mother was a powerhouse of a personality and relentless in her ways to achieve her goal. Soon I began

an internal battle to fight for myself. For weeks, I carried a secret thought to get myself free, but I never saw it as suicidal, just survival.

I craved some space so I could breathe and think. I needed to get away, but where and how eluded me. I also kept hoping the urge to leave would just go away and sometimes it did for awhile, but it would resurface even stronger next time. Finally, I remembered what Jack had said to me when we first met: "Why don't you just surrender to the experience of loving me?" It had been a powerful pick-up line. After he asked me that, I was his. 'Yes, why don't I just trust and let go?' I had thought. So, I surrendered to all of it, like a calling. Now this felt the same way.

~

I needed to trust that power again and go where it led me. I found that a bus ticket to Mexico was only $225 and I had some jewellery to sell to cover that. It left me with a couple of hundred more and I would see how far that got me. My parents were leaving for a trip to Manitoba. I would be alone for a day before my sister arrived for a

visit. I left a long letter hoping to lessen the worry yet suspecting it wouldn't.

I got on the bus the next day knowing that by the time it was discovered I was missing, I'd be across the Mexican border. I had one small bag with me which contained a few clothes, one spiritual book, my photo of Jack, some toiletries and some survival items (flashlight, bedroll). I didn't have any real plan. I thought I might find a place to die, but still did not recognize this as being suicidal. It seemed I had to let go of everything in order to find myself again. If I died, then so be it. After three days of travel, I had crossed the Mexican border and carried on to Tampico which is on the Atlantic side. I wanted to know if it was Mexico calling me or my life with Jack in Mexico for which I yearned. I went to a place where he and I had never been together to evaluate how I felt.

Locating a cheap hotel right across the street from the bus station, I stayed there. My return ticket would expire after a week and I wanted to be close to the station in case I wanted to use it. I barely went anywhere. Staying in my room reading my spiritual book over and over, I rested from the stress of the past several years. The solitude was pure bliss.

As the date for the bus departure grew closer, I was still in no way ready to return. I knew nothing would be different, perhaps worse, because I had given everyone such a fright. I decided to see how far my money would take me, so I got a cab and told the driver to take me to the nearest beach. I had no way of knowing that unlike the Pacific side of Mexico, beaches were few and far between here. He drove for quite awhile, then turned off a side road. We ended up at a pier where there was a ferry to take people across the lagoon. End of the road.

There was a small bodega shop on the left and a row of shacks. I paid the driver and ignored his strange looks at me. Another crazy gringa, I suspected he thought. I went the other direction from the huts and walked along a path past a larger house. No one was around so I kept going. I had to climb over a high wire fence and go deeper into the field. Finally, I found a protected spot under a large tree and I lay down on my plastic groundsheet. After a few hours of dozing, I heard a noise on my right side. A rustle on my left side. To my horror, there were horns. The huge bulls took shape as I turned my head side to side. I threw my coat over my head and waited for the inevitable. I was oddly more resigned than afraid.

'This is how I'm going to die,' I thought, 'trampled by bulls.'

For what seemed like an eternity, the bulls sniffed at me and stamped their feet. I started to relax and they gradually became disinterested and wandered away. They were just curious about who was sharing their field.

It grew darker and I heard a sound which was worse than the bulls. It was starting to drizzle. Then it came down with increasing force. Soaked, I decided to return to the bodega shop to take shelter. By now the field was muddy and my shoes got filthy. I stepped in piles of manure which I hadn't noticed on the way in. Coming to the wire fence, I struggled to get myself over with difficulty. I had lost all concept of time. It was pitch dark, even with a flashlight, that's all I knew.

A light appeared from the big house shining directly on me. Shouting "Hola," I walked towards it and that turned out to be the real beginning of a wonderful adventure. As I approached, a man was holding up the lamp with a woman at his side. There were others as well, but I couldn't make them out. Realizing that I had to tell them something, in broken Spanish, I said I was sick and wanted to see Mexico one more time.

"In mente" he said. The man clearly thought I was sick in my mind.

Even though I said no, I suspected his immediate assessment was right. That light was the beginning of facing myself and what I had done to my life. It was in ruins and now I was dependent on the kindness of strangers. I was to be far from disappointed though.

Barbara, the woman, showed me to a small hut next to the house and cooking shelter. There was a single bed with a mosquito net over it. I had about $100 in pesos which I gave to her in payment for my lodging even though I sensed that she expected nothing. It was all the money I possessed and now with no bus return ticket, I had nowhere to go. My whole life was on the line.

I was sheltered and warm, living among people again so I felt safe. I stayed there two months before I felt strong enough to move on. In all that time, the family never asked me to explain further. Showing Jack's picture, I gradually told them about our life together and his death. I think they felt my grief and left me to deal with it in my way. I had all the time and space I needed to address my issues without interference which was exactly what I wanted.

Every day, Barbara tried to feed me. My weaknesses were coffee and watermelon, but I refused all other offerings. I hoped to starve myself to death, but all that happened was that I lost weight. I still felt strong. Truth be told, my spirit felt stronger than ever. The hours passed and then the days and weeks. I read my spiritual book, practicing the familiar principles as I had done many times before. It both grounded me and helped my spirit soar.

I sat alone watching the family's activities: getting up at dawn to fish, preparing meals in the cooking hut or outside on nice days, afternoon siestas, going by boat to collect water from the communal well close to the bodega. Gradually I got involved: tutoring English to the youngest, helping Barbara cut the spikes off the cactus before cooking and feeding the pig. A simple, abundant, peaceful life.

The pig -- this was the most important member of the family. I alone remembered to feed and water the chickens and their growing chicks, but everyone in the family fed the pig as much as possible. It did not have a name because it was only kept for a year and would then be the main dish of a festival like Christmas. I never knew that it was true that you could feed a pig any scraps. He especially loved watermelon rinds. From time to time,

someone would lead him down to the lagoon where he wallowed in the mud. He had so much fun that I could watch him for hours and I did this happily.

About once a week, someone would have a party at their shack. Everyone would attend and I came to realize how close this community was. There would always be a large fire, lots of beer and usually a turtle stew. Everyone knew each other and now they were including me in the group. Once in a while I would have a beer, but I never ate with them. By this time, I was never hungry.

I was clearly a novelty becoming quickly known as 'the woman who slept with the bulls.' Word spread far and wide. Many local people, including the police, started visiting to see this woman who came from The North to live and hide from the world. Despite the inability to communicate well, it was the most excitement the area had ever had. Papers in order, even police welcomed me to my great relief.

Meanwhile I was sorting through the monumental changes to my life. How was I going to live without Jack now? Each year, I would find that whole week of St. Valentine's was cursed since he died on the 17th. I could not see a light at the end of the tunnel. Life felt dark to me.

Gradually the sun and peaceful nature of my environment sank into my being. I soon came to feel Jack's presence with me more as I reflected back on our own life in rural Mexico. I could see the world as he would have seen it because he had taught me how. I imagined his comments and heard his direction because I knew him so well, I could finish his sentences. He had sometimes told me that I did not listen well. It had been true at times, but this was the time to improve and alter that skill. I had to learn to listen with a heightened intuitive awareness. It came with a feeling of knowingness. It felt right: confirmation that sounds like something Jack would say or do.

I began to feel lighter in my heart and mind. Excitement and elation bubbled up periodically on a deep personal level. I came to discover joy when I heard the children playing with a rope in the yard. It felt like a revelation: THAT is what joy sounds like. The integration of these listening aspects healed my heart like a balm on a deep wound in such a gentle subtle way that I hardly noticed. Slowly I began to feel truly better.

One day I got an epiphany: that I would never be without Jack in spirit. It was not an intellectual thing; it was more visceral than that. It penetrated my being as truth. I

could feel him and be with him, just without a form. He would always be where I was now. I *knew* him to the core.

Thoughts about going back started to surface. I would immediately block them. I thought I'd burned too many bridges there. One day, I was walking down the path towards the shacks and, to my surprise, thought: 'my family will just think I'm crazy.' Immediately I felt a huge weight fall off my shoulders. 'I can handle that,' I thought, 'I know the truth.' That day, I accepted the bowl of turtle stew with a beer and was mighty glad I did. The food was delicious and the family was thrilled to see me actually eating a proper meal. One week later, Barbara's oldest son came to visit from Tampico. Since I was in his bed, he slept in his car. After two days of visiting, he was ready to go home. Suddenly before I knew it, I was asking if I could go with him. My time there was up. I was fine with it. My internal work was well underway and I knew it would progress.

Jack had been a biologist, zoologist, entomologist, as well as a psychologist so he told me fascinating nature stories that kept me spell-bound. I remembered him telling me about the point in the chrysalis of a butterfly where there appears to be nothing recognizable under a

microscope. Then the butterfly starts to develop -- the caterpillar completely disappears.

I felt the same way. I had let go of the 'old' me and a new form was emerging. I called this being *ceci* with a small 'c' to remind myself that I am always learning. It was also Jack's personal name for me. At the core was an intimate awareness of a power greater than myself and a spiritual connection with Jack, both of which would never leave me again. The profound wound in me had been lanced and sufficiently healed over while I had just hung out and gone whichever way I was directed. The love I had found was mine to keep forever.

I knew I was fragile, but I also felt a new and deep trust for the process of healing. I got here with that power and now I would discover the trip back by hitchhiking. I felt excited and only a little anxious. An uplifting phrase kept coming to mind: 'Voy con Dios' (Go with God).

After two days with four rides, I reached Jack's sister's house in Oklahoma. Three drivers were perfect gentlemen, but the first, who drank beer all the way, leered at my body from time to time. I tried to ignore him and the possible danger. I was only starting to feel my vulnerability. I managed to find out that he was a policeman in the area

and hoped that might help me. 'Wrong,' I came to soon realize.

Pulling over to relieve ourselves in the wilderness, he stood beside my door as I got in and his hand brushed my breast. I glared at him and said "NO." Jack guided me here as I remembered when he had told me long ago that Mexican men, in order to be macho, have to try to hustle a woman, but a strong refusal always makes them back down. It worked and nothing else happened on that leg of the trip. However, the hint of danger needled me. I was waking up to what I had done to myself as I watched mile after mile of empty desert and mountains pass by. It was like a bubble I'd been in that was starting to crack.

Even so, I dreaded the end of the trip with him as it meant I needed another ride. I was in anticipation of the US border. The problem was I knew of no place that the truckers would stop close to the border. True enough, I walked for ages until finally collapsing beside the highway. Now I was really scared for the first time. I could not believe what I had done to myself. 'I am going to die here. Isn't that what you wanted?' The internal battle continued until I was too tired to think anymore. I hadn't slept for two nights by now.

Then Jack stepped in. I felt his familiar presence which commanded me to: "STAND UP, PUT ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE OTHER, SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN."

That is what I did. I stood up, took about five steps, then heard honking behind me. Looking around, there was a police car motioning me to stop. No hitchhiking allowed. Shocked, I realized he wouldn't have seen me if I hadn't stood up. I gladly let him take me to the nearest truck stop.

At all the stops, people had been giving me money which was how I could afford the final cab ride. The kindness of strangers continued to overwhelm me. Most people thought I was just down on my luck and offered money apologetically if they were unable to give me a ride.

At the door, Jack's sister greeted me with "If I'd known you were coming, I'd have cleaned up a bit." As I walked into the house, I thought *a bit* wouldn't help. It was like an episode from 'Hoarding: Buried Alive.' I gagged on the stench of cat urine and moldy food. For three days, I helped clean her kitchen. We barely made a dent. The fish bowl held only black water and when I cleaned it, I was amazed to see a live fish in it. How on earth had it survived? Behind closed doors, other rooms were loaded with stuff. I

couldn't even bear to look in there. Even the two-car garage was packed to the roof.

She loaned me the bus fare back to Canada and I was hugely relieved to get out of there. On the phone, my mother was thankful to hear from me after two months, but only conveyed her anger. It was her usual defense. I wasn't sure if I would be welcome. I had no other option.

I called Dad with the 3:00 a.m. bus time arrival to their town. I told him not to pick me up, just leave the door open and I'd let myself in. I wasn't even sure they would do that. But when the bus pulled in, I saw my parents' car. Dad gave me a big bear hug and I looked over at my Mom who had her head turned away. Only then did she hug me. I don't think she wanted me to see her cry.

At the house, the table was set beautifully for six people, but typical Dad went straight up to bed without a word. He loved his sleep. I told Mom the basics about the Mexican family I had stayed with. She was genuinely grateful to them for taking care of me. It was a short talk. After being at Jack's sister's house, I was enormously happy to be back in a clean, orderly home.

The next morning, I found out why the table had been set for six. My older sister and one of her daughters were there for an intervention. Stealing their thunder, I agreed to go to treatment right away. I told them I would not have come back unless I had been prepared to do that. My mother hugged me, saying "We would have had you committed if you'd refused." Typical Mom, overkill.

That same afternoon, we all went to the hospital and I witnessed something that made me see my mother in a new light. Desperate to draw attention, she said to anyone that would listen: "My daughter is suicidal." I was touched by that.

For the first and last time, I was admitted to the psych ward. In a twist of fate, I had applied for a job here before I left and now here I was, a patient. Over the course of a month, I was administered several types of medications, but the one I appreciated the most was the sleeping pill. My brain simply did not have an off switch and any stimulation took hours for me to process. The meds helped to slow things down to manageable portions so that I felt more in control. Mom came for regular visits, but dad did not. He found them too difficult. I saw him on weekend home visits which were a little strained. When it

came time to plan my discharge, I could tell they wanted, understandably, another alternative to having me back. I too desired my independence. Mom asked my therapist about a half-way house, but their combined pension income made me ineligible for such community programs. My family had a place for me to live whether they liked it or not.

By then, I had learned the rules and how to fit in so as not to draw negative attention to myself. I also had a new inner core of strength which was my coveted prize. I had moments of genuine happiness which were awesome. Ready to be with my parents in a new way, I realized the extensive support network I had with my family. The doctors had given me a name for this thing I had struggled with for as long as I could remember. It was bipolar disorder, a chemical imbalance in the brain only treatable by medication. It is a real affliction which gets worse with age. I was living proof of that. I had been self-medicating with alcohol: a behaviour that compounds the problem.

Several critical things happened at this point. My mom was diagnosed with terminal cancer and, after giving up on the chemo, was resigned to her fate. I asked her one

day: “If you see Jack on the other side, will you say ‘Hello’ for me?”

There was a brief pause. “Yes,” she said.

To me, this was a monumental statement for her to make. Up until then, I did not think she had any beliefs in an afterlife.

Another day, I sat at her feet and said, “Will you please forgive me for everything I’ve done to hurt you and the family?”

“There’s nothing to forgive,” she stated without hesitation.

My jaw dropped. I was in awe of her at that moment. I think facing death forced her to reflect and revise a lot of her previous thinking. This new depth with my mother was a gift.

Ever since, both comments ring happily in my brain and continue to heal old hurts if and when they surface. I am now at peace with my relationship with her and more aware of the complexity of the mother/daughter bond.

When mom died a few months later, her husband of sixty-four years and all her children with their spouses

surrounded her. I realized that if Jack was still alive, I would be with him in Mexico, not her. I was genuinely glad that my mother got what she wanted in her final moments. Despite my tragedies, I was thankful I'd been there to celebrate her. It healed many wounds. She deserved that kind of contentment because in her heart, she truly did love her family and had worked hard over the years making sure we were all doing well.

Rest in peace, Mom.

~

P.S. I tried to contact that family again. I sent a big box at Christmas. It didn't get through. Now I think of them as a private episode from 'Touched by an Angel.' It was all created just for me for a two-month time frame. It had none of the distracting electrical stimulations, providing lots of time for reflection. The experience provided everything I needed and, in my mind, the part of Barbara was actually Monica. I was healed by being bathed in generous, unconditional love and light that lasts to this day.

~

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